Student motivation in L2 English teaching and learning

A study on students’ perspectives of L2 classroom-centered motivational practices at a lower-secondary school

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Abstract


Keywords

Motivation, Motivational strategies, Dörnyei and Csizér’s’ Ten Commandments, English teaching practices, L2 teacher, and learner.
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1. Introduction

Motivation is a concept that often comes up as regards creating good and suitable learning environments for all students. It concerns the fundamental question of why people behave as they do and is one of the essential factors in second language (L2) learning and acquisition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Celce-Murcia et al, 2014). According to Ryan & Deci (2000), a motivated person is “energized and activated towards an end” (p. 54) with the will and desire to participate in the ongoing learning process.

The Swedish curriculum for compulsory school (Lgr 11), stresses the schools’ responsibility in ensuring that students are motivated to learn. Accordingly, the school is responsible for being “a living social community that provides security and generates the will and desire to learn [in every student].” (Skolverket, 2019:9). The desire and will to learn (which is a mental ability) is, according to Andersson (2017), often connected to motivation and is expressed in some form of learning activity. Hence, the school is supposed to enhance students’ engagement and motivation by encouraging them to take initiative in and actively participate in their learning processes.

This implication of the teacher’s ability to affect factors related to the students makes motivation a crucial task for teachers (and even students). Moreover, given that learning a language is a quite demanding and long-lasting process, adopting a motivational conscious teaching is essential to foster students’ efforts and keep them motivated in the learning process (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Some studies have highlighted ways in which teachers and students can jointly work towards motivating students to succeed. These ways have included using classroom management strategies (Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Wiliam 2011; Hattie 2012), task designs (Henry et al., 2018) and even promoting students’ self-regulation strategies (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009). Nonetheless, lack of motivation (demotivation) and engagement are real challenges students and teachers generally grapple with in the L2 learning classroom. Regrettably, the teacher’s actions and responsibilities, amongst other factors, have been identified as (external) sources of students’ demotivation (Sundqvist & Olin-Scheller 2013; Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Hattie 2009).

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) emphasizes the teacher and his or her teaching actions, apart from the requirements on the students, as widely influential in aiding students to achieve the aims of the curriculum, since they, through their actions can affect factors related to the students (Skolinspektionen, 2010, p. 10). Moreover, even research in the field has highlighted motivational strategies teachers can and adopt to motivate students (Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Henry et al., 2018). However, not
much has been done to enlighten students’ perceptions and experience of the teacher’s use of strategies to engage and motivate them in the L2 classroom, especially in a Swedish context. Andersson (2017) stresses that research on engagement, although extensive, rarely starts from students' thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, given that motivation is also contingent on the will and desire of the student to participate in learning, it is reasonable to solicit the student’s perspective on the process. Therefore, the present paper aspires to enlighten sources of students’ engagement and motivation in L2 learning that will ultimately lead to academic achievement, using narratives of 4 lower secondary school students in a city in Sweden.

### 1.1 Aim and research questions

There is no doubt that motivation is important, especially for L2 learning success. Moreover, given its importance, researchers in education have looked at different aspects of motivation such as motivation in the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. The language level has to do with integrative and instrumental elements of L2 motivation, such as pragmatic values and benefits and even cultural-affective values attached to the target language (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the aspect of the learner level, the learner is the bearer of motivation (Cardelús 2015). Here, the learner's individual characteristics, such as the learner's need for achievement and self-confidence, which he or she brings to the learning process, are considered. The third area motivation research has focused on is the learning situation level which deals with situation-specific motives firmly established in various aspects of language learning in a classroom setting (Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Henry et al 2018). These include course-specific (e.g., teaching methods, materials, and tasks), teacher-specific (e.g., teacher's personality, behaviour and teaching style) and group-specific motivational components relating to characteristics of learner group (e.g., norm and reward system and classroom goal structure).

With regards to what lies within the reach of the teacher and the classroom, scholars have tried to draw conclusions from this and developed a guideline for classroom motivational strategies, given the complexity of motivation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Seemingly, there is a need for specificity and practicality concerning direct classroom application of motivational strategies, a motivationally conscious teaching approach (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Accordingly, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and even more recent research (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008) offer recommendations of relevant classroom motivational strategies like creating a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, developing a good relationship with the students, and promoting learner autonomy, which (language) teachers can use to motivate their students in the language classroom (see section 2.1). Noteworthy is that these strategies pinpoint and address factors that impact students’ classroom motivation. They also provide practical methods teachers can use to generate and maintain L2 learners' motivation to engage students in the classroom and learning process. Despite their practicality in increasing students' motivation, Henry et al. (2018) claim that they have been
under-researched. Moreover, noteworthy is the lack of research investigating what students think about teachers' use of these strategies to engage them in the L2 learning process.

Accordingly, the overall aim of the present paper is to investigate the sources of students' motivation to engage in the L2 English classroom. In an attempt to enlighten how the students perceive these sources or actions, this study will investigate students' narratives of their experiences of teachers' motivational strategies in the L2 classroom. The following questions will frame the study:

1. What English teaching actions and classroom situation(s) motivate students to engage in the learning process?
2. How does extrinsic motivation affect the students’ engagement in the classroom?

2. Motivational theories and engagement

2.1 Dörnyei’s motivational strategies

Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) ten commandments for motivating language learners will frame the present study, since the focus here is on teaching actions and moments that motivate students to engage in the L2 classroom. These strategies are from a teacher-survey in Hungary wherein 200 teachers of English rated the importance of a set of 51 strategies to estimate how often they used the strategies in their teaching practice. According to Dörnyei & Csizér (1998), these Ten Commandments are broad recommendations that teachers can apply to motivate their students. They are quite practical, and their usage and efficacy could result in differing outcomes depending on contextual, cultural, and even educational factors and settings surrounding the circumstance in which they are used (Henry et al., 2018). The commandments/strategies are (1) Setting a personal example with your own behavior, (2) creating a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, (3) presenting the tasks properly, (4) developing a good relationship with the learners, (5) increasing the learners' linguistic self-confidence, making the language classes interesting, (7) promoting learner autonomy (8) personalizing the learning process, (9) increasing the learners' goal-orientedness and (10) familiarizing learners with the target language culture. These will form the analytical basis of the paper, and for the present study, these strategies have been clustered into the aspects teacher, task(s), and classroom climate (see Interview guide). For an overview of components
Lundahl (2012:202-211) discusses different ways of understanding the concept of motivation. One way is the interactionist (student) perspective. Here, motivation is seen as a multidimensional concept involving students' subjective perceptions of their skills, feelings, and attitudes. Interaction here is seen firstly as a social process, and then a cognitive process and learning in this context is, through participation in a social practice (with others). Moreover, the contexts in which students find themselves are essential from an interactionist perspective, just like in a sociocultural perspective where the social context in which the language is being learned is essential to the students' learning process. Accordingly, motivation to learn is considered an individual as well as a collective phenomenon (Säljö, 2015:101-106). Another basis for understanding motivation is from the behaviourist theory (Lundahl 2012:192; Philip & Soltis 2017:50; Säljö 2015:31). This theory highlights that language is a behaviour, and as such, it is learned through positive and negative reinforcements or conditioning, like any other behaviour. Accordingly, motivation to learn a language comes from external rewards or punishments. This perspective is relevant to the present study given that the teacher's role is essential to the motivational process as he or she can, through incentives, steer the student towards successful learning. However, motivation is a multidimensional, dynamic, and context-sensitive construct (Cardelús 2015), a rather complicated instance where personal factors, behaviour, and environmental factors interact. Since most classroom tasks are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, Ryan and Deci (2000:55) stress that in order to achieve successful teaching, the teacher should be knowledgeable in ways to promote more active and volitional forms of extrinsic motivation.

Concerning motivation in school contexts, intrinsic motivation (IM) and extrinsic motivation (EM) (respectively internal and external regulators) are two basic types of motivation identified in educational psychology and is at the core of the framework of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory of motivation (SDT). SDT is a theory of motivation that addresses innate and psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and psychological relatedness. Understanding these internal and external motivation dimensions is essential since they help understand students' desire to learn. It is also essential since this study focuses on investigating sources of students' motivation to engage in English lessons by looking at their perceptions of teachers' use of motivational strategies. According to Noels et al. (1999), the self-determination model is useful for assessing teaching strategies because it "makes clear statements about how certain psychological and communication constructs and processes predict and explain the effectiveness of those strategies (p. 31)".
2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation, on the one hand, refers to motivation to perform an activity because it is inherently enjoyable and interesting and this type of motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity (Noels et al., 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000). This type of motivation implies that learning is maintained by the student's interest and goal in the activity, a need, and a sense of self-determination and competence. Nonetheless, because "basic need satisfaction accrues from engaging in interesting activities" Ryan and Deci (2000:57), the teacher also has a key role in harnessing students' intrinsic motivation in the classroom setting, through planning appropriate activities which for instance arouse students' interest. Moreover, the innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, all components highlighting students' responsibility, engagement, and participation as highlighted in the curriculum, are, according to Ryan and Deci (2000:57), satisfied by intrinsically motivated behaviours. According to the SDT, a learner's orientation (the reason why motivation occurs) is usually affected by factors in the learner's social environment that affect self-perceptions of competence and autonomy, and the teacher (an external source) is a crucial figure in affecting these perceptions (Noels et al., 1999; Noels et al., 2000). Accordingly, a teacher's communicative style (for example, in providing clear feedback of learning progress) goes a long way in enhancing students' self-perceptions of autonomy and competence and hence enhances intrinsic motivational orientations.

Extrinsic motivation (EM), on the other hand, is the motivation to do something because of a separable instrumental outcome. Here, the source of the motivation is usually external to the activity per se, such as a course grade, a job, or even for travel (Noels et al., 1999; Noels et al., 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) point out that there are different sides to EM, one in which the students are propelled to action and another wherein the students engage due to a sense of volition. In the former case (a classic case of EM), the students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, or disinterest. In the latter case, the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed. Hence, they propose that educators are acquainted with these types of EM as they cannot always rely on IM to foster learning. Clearly, IM and EM are strong foundational cornerstones on which motivation can be enhanced.

2.3 Intraperisonal and Interpersonal motivation

The intrapersonal and interpersonal theories of motivation are quite relevant to the present study. According to Weiner (2000), these interconnected theories, which influence factors including the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the learner, the teacher and other students involved in the learning process are essential to motivational processes. The intrapersonal motivation theory, on the one hand, includes thoughts and feelings concerning certain situations directed to oneself. These thoughts could concern one's expectations
of success and the accompanying feelings of pride, shame, and even guilt with regards to performance. The interpersonal theory, on the other hand, includes perceptions of others' responsibilities and feelings of, for instance, anger or sympathy that are directed to oneself and others as well. Again, these theories are relevant, above all the interpersonal theory is quite relevant in that it highlights the importance of the teacher's communicative style and relationship to the students as important for students' motivational processes. For instance, if a student feels that the teacher has no hope in them succeeding, this might result in the student feeling shame and a decline in the student's self-confidence and performance. However, if a teacher is supportive and encouraging, this will give the students a feeling of success and thereby enhance their will and desire to engage.

Evident in these dimensions of motivation is that they highlight motivation as essential for successful language learning and the learner, as predominantly in charge of the learning process. This is interesting because emphasis has been on the student as responsible for creating his or her own motivation and commitment in coming to school and participating and tackling schoolwork, as is highlighted in the curriculum for lower-secondary school. The students should "genom egen ansträngning och delaktighet, utifrån sina förutsättningar, tar ansvar för sitt lärande och för att bidra till en god arbetsmiljö" (Skolverket, 2019:13). However, although this is still the case, according to Andersson (2017:46), there has been a recent shift in focus and emphasis now lies on the school (teachers) having to be competent (Ogden 2017) and responsible for creating learning environments which are engaging for the students.

2.4 Engagement

When it comes to engagement, the underlying basis is that students are meaningfully involved in their learning through participation in interactive and worthwhile tasks (Wiliam, 2011). Wiliam highlights how collaborative learning and teamwork can enhance students' engagement in their learning process. Accordingly, an L2 language learner’s willingness to identify and communicate with others in the target language (the language being learned) is important for language learning since L2 acquisition "presupposes active engagement in social practices mediated by the L2" (Henry, 2012:25). In this regard, a combination of a desire or choice, an effort, as well as a positive attitude and persistence or engagement shown by a learner in striving for the goal of learning a language (motivation) (Dörnyei, 2001a) is hence futile without engagement and vice versa. Because on the one hand, with a lack of enough motivation, learners cannot accomplish long-term goals even with good quality teaching, appropriate curricula, or remarkable (language) learning skills. However, high motivation, on the other hand, can compensate for significant deficiencies in a learner's language aptitude as well as learning conditions (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998:204).
3. Previous research on motivation

People's reasons for doing things or motivation is a term that is used by teachers and students alike when trying to explain success and or failure in second language (L2) learning (Celce-Murcia et al, 2014:518; Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Dörnyei, 2001a). A motivated student participates and engages in the ongoing learning process, which results in his or her performing highly and subsequently is a successful student (Dunne & Owen, 2013). According to Andersson (2017), such engagement depicts an individual or a group's active involvement in a task. Moreover, individuals or groups that are engaged in school experience a form of belonging to the school, are inclined to learn and want to use goal-oriented learning strategies to achieve successful learning (Andersson, 2017:14).

Studies have shown that students' motivation to engage in the learning process helps them attain successful learning (Andersson 2017; Cardelús 2015). Moreover, their engagement in learning enables them to promote meaningful learning experiences, increase their attention and focus, as well as it drives them to practice and achieve a higher level of critical thinking (Wiliam, 2011; Andersson, 2017). Although the role of the student is highlighted as important in this process, the teacher's role is also crucial to the process as implied in the Swedish curriculum for English. Moreover, according to Wiliam (2011), teachers can increase the students' desires and opportunities for engagement in learning by adopting a student-centered, autonomy-supportive approach to instruction. This approach puts the teacher as a facilitator of the learning process, whereby the teacher, through differentiated instruction, enhances students' interest and enjoyment, which encourages participation in the learning. The teacher's autonomy-supportive behaviour, which is also associated with the classroom climate, is effective in fostering relationships and classroom group cohesiveness, which subsequently motivates students to engage and achieve the intended learning objectives. This approach also forms the premise of the Swedish curriculum for English, making it a general guiding principle for a teacher to ensure successful learning.

Research has also looked at several different aspects, levels, and components of motivation in language learning and has highlighted aspects and strategies including promoting learner autonomy and self-regulation (Hattie 2012), teacher and peer feedback (Wiliam 2011), fostering good teacher-student relations and learning environment, as essential to language learning success (Ellis 1997; Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Dörnyei 2001a). For instance, Wiliam (2011) highlights the importance of formative feedback/scaffolding in motivating learners to engage in learning. He argues that different aspects of feedback/scaffolding contribute to engaging students in the learning process and learning achievement. These include who provides the feedback (teacher or peer), how it is delivered (individual, small group, or whole class), the
type of feedback (evaluative, descriptive, or holistic with grades comments or grades plus comments). In addition, the mode of presentation of the feedback (written, verbal, or video) and the focus of the feedback (on the product, the process, self-regulation for cognitive feedback, or goal orientation, self-efficacy for affective feedback) are also included. Notwithstanding, Wiliam (2011) claims that most of the research on feedback provides somewhat ambiguous and contradictory findings and does not provide enough guidance for teachers on how to give feedback effectively.

In addition, Noels et al., (1999) using questionnaires, investigated how 78 Anglophone students registered in a 6-week summer French immersion course in Canada perceive certain aspects of teacher’s communicative styles, and how these perceptions are related to motivation within the context of self-determination theory. Specifically, they looked at how teachers' support of students' autonomy and providing useful feedback about students' learning progress, are perceived to be related to students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivational orientations and language learning outcomes such as effort, anxiety, and language competence. The findings indicated that students’ strong feelings of intrinsic motivation were correlated to positive language learning outcomes, including greater motivational intensity, greater self-evaluations of competence, and a reduction in anxiety. The findings also enlightened the strong correlation between students’ perceptions of the teacher's communicative style to intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, the more controlling a teacher is perceived to be, the lower students’ intrinsic motivation. Moreover, the less informative about for example, instructive feedback students perceived the teacher to be, the lower students' intrinsic motivation.

The teacher's leadership role and good relationship with his or her students have been found to enhance motivation and engagement. For example, Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis on achievement, an extensive analysis dating the results of several other studies on the influences on achievement on school-aged students emphasizes several aspects of the teacher's role as essential to students' motivational and engagement processes. Some of these aspects include the teacher's specific characteristics, for example, his or her acts and personality and the teaching situation created by the teacher. Other examples include good relations between the teacher and his or her students, the teacher's (high) expectations on all students, the teacher's ability to focus on what is essential in the teaching, and even sound and properly timed feedback. Again, teaching-related factors like the teacher's leadership ability, didactic skills in effectively communicating the subject content to students and even, and relationship building and fostering ability and engagement (Ogden, 2017) are also highlighted as having a high impact on students’ performance to a great extent.
3.1 Research in Sweden

In a Swedish context, motivation and engagement have also been looked at from different perspectives. For instance, Andersson (2017), in her doctoral dissertation, investigated what students find engaging in school using questionnaires, students' written reflections, and interviews. The findings highlight that a sense of belonging and good relations with the teacher and fellow students gave students a feeling of security and caused them to be motivated to engage in school. In addition, Henry et al. (2018), using the framework of Dörnyei's (2001a) motivational strategies, investigated the use of motivational strategies as revealed in teachers' descriptions of their activity design and content in classroom activities that generate motivation amongst learners with extensive extramural English backgrounds. The study analysed the content of 112 descriptions of classroom motivational activities from EFL teachers in Sweden. The findings highlight the importance of teachers using authentic materials and providing students with learning opportunities that enable them to interact with English in ways that might avoid some of the negative motivational dissonances experienced between informal engagement with English outside school and formal lessons in school. Humour was also insinuated in teachers' descriptions as important to motivational processes, although the study did not explicitly treat humour in the study. Henry et al. (2018) claim that grade 6-9 teachers in Sweden do not regard humour as an effective strategy in generating motivation. Notwithstanding, Henry et al. (2018) stress that humour may play an important role in motivating language learners.

Lastly, and quite relevant is Cardelús' (2015) study, which investigated the motivational processes of 43 students enrolled in the last year of foreign language studies in two schools in Sweden. Using interviews, students' narratives, and open-ended questionnaires, he evaluated factors and processes that affect students' choice of studying and learning the foreign languages French, German, and Spanish. Framed by the sociocognitive theory, the results indicated that the students are often driven by intrinsic motivation (a feeling of enjoyment, pleasure, and curiosity), mastery goals (being fluent or communicatively competent in the target language) and an experience of self-efficacy1 rooted in the experience of success and in being encouraged by significant others or role models. Cardelús further emphasizes that also important to students' motivational processes is the need to travel and have contact with target language cultures and speakers, being able to communicate in authentic situations as well as the role of family or relatives. Cardelús' (2015) study is relevant for the present study because it investigated motivation using students' narratives, although in the context of modern languages. It is also adopted in the present study as it might enlighten the aim of the present study; sources of students’ motivation to engage in the L2 classroom as well as their perceptions of teacher motivational strategies revealed in their narratives.

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1 Self-efficacy is a personal judgment of “how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (Bandura, 1997).
4. Methodology

In order to address my research aim and questions, I chose to use a qualitative method to get a broad and thorough description as possible (Cohen et al., 2011; Dörnyei 2007; Hedin & Martin, 1996). The choice of qualitative method in the form of group interviews is motivated by the intention to capture detailed narratives of the informants' perceptions of teaching actions and moments in which they feel engaged and motivated. Dörnyei (2001b) considers the qualitative method (in this case, interview) to be better suited for investigating motivation than quantitative methods, in that it enables the researcher to explore the internal dynamics of the intricate and multilevel construct of student motivation. It may also provide new insights into old questions (p. 49).

A premise in the present study is that measuring student motivation is challenging given that motivation is somewhat complicated and involves an interplay between personal factors, behaviour, and environmental factors. Nevertheless, self-reports of interest and enjoyment of a given activity have been commonly used to measure (intrinsic) motivation. Therefore, in order to manage the aforementioned complexity, I used a method inspired by Cardelús’ (2015) interviewing methodology. The students therein were encouraged to tell and narrate about their motivation in foreign language learning. The narrative approach helps enlighten how people are representing themselves and their experiences to themselves and others and "is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning" (Webster & Mertova 2007, cited in Cardelús 2015). In the design in the present paper (Appendix II), participants were asked (open-ended questions) to describe certain aspects of their experiences or situations where they felt motivated to engage in an English lesson. The reason for this design was an attempt to prompt the participants to introspectively account for or respond to questions asked in order to obtain in-depth and nuanced responses.

4.1 Material and procedure

The following sections describe and explain the materials used for the study. Firstly, I will explain the process through which the interview material was collected, followed by advantages and limitations. After that, the consent form and the structure of the interview guide will be described, followed by the aspects guiding the interview. Lastly, the participants' selection and data analysis process will be explained.

The empirical data used in the present study, consists of 4 lower-secondary school students narratives collected through a group interview. The collection of the material took place in the following stages. First,
a few days before the interview, I verbally informed the students about the study along with the distribution of the consent forms. Then, I met the students again briefly to collect the consent forms and give them detailed verbal information about how the interview would be conducted. During this brief meeting the students filled in the questionnaire in the interview guide part I (Appendix II), and we skimmed through the interview guide Part II together (Appendix II). These actions were taken for the following reasons: Firstly, the questionnaire survey was used to elicit background information (empirical data) from the participants. Lastly, skimming through the interview guide was in order to start up a reflection process about motivation amongst the participants, before the interview. However, the participants did not have these documents with them during the interview process. The duration of the interview was between 45-50, but the interaction comprising the data for the study was between 36-40 minutes. The interaction was audio-recorded and later transcribed in full. The interview was semi-structured and was conducted using the interview guide (Appendix II). The aforenamed processes were inspired by Cardelús (2015). An unexpected setback occurred on the day of the interview because a participant opted out of the interaction (see section 4.4), but this was resolved. However, no interruptions occurred during the interaction, except for times when the interaction veered from the topic. Those episodes were omitted in the transcriptions.

4.1.1 Advantages and limitations

An advantage of the group interview method is the potential it allows for discussion to develop hence yielding a wide range of responses, thereby resulting in better insights into the study. Additionally, it is useful when interviewing children as the group dynamic encourages interaction in the group and enables children to challenge each other and participate in ways that help them feel less intimidated and elicit nuances in responses given (Cohen et al., 2011). Considering that all research materials and techniques pose limitations, a downside of this method is that it is time-consuming to conduct and requires improvising since the interview guide questions are quite a few. Moreover, given that much content emerges from well-managed group discussions facilitated by probe questions (Dörnyei, 2007), the interviewer must have a knack for asking questions and communicating. Hence, measures were taken to eliminate as many obstacles as I could. For instance, as already mentioned, I met and informed the participants about logistics around the interaction before it happened and made an extra effort to catch nuances in responses and drive the follow-up questions with those. Another foreseeable limitation to using the group interview, especially with students, is that there is the risk of them responding by building on the response of the previous speaker. Aware of the possibility of this occurring, measures were taken to either repeat questions asked or tweak the follow-up questions to get original responses from every participant.

4.2 Information and consent sheet

Given that the investigation was conducted with underaged learners, the information and consent sheet was a requirement for the survey according to the ethical guidelines of the Swedish research council
Accordingly, if a study directly involves the participation of students, the investigator must inform the students and their guardians about the purpose of the study. They then must give their consent to participate. It is also a requirement that the consent is given in the form of written information and the consent form should contain information including the general plan of the study, purpose, methods, as well as information on participation. This document contained two parts. The first part, a letter addressed to the participants and their guardians, contained logistics about the study, including what the study is about, the aim of the study, how it would be performed, expectations on participants, addressing ethical issues concerning the material, and my contact details. The second part contained the principal's consent (signature) to conduct the study in the school as well as provisions for the consents of both the guardians and the participants (Appendix I).

4.3 Interview guide

The interview guide comprised two parts; the first part named questionnaire contained a brief text with information about the study and instructions guiding the participants on the format of the interview. Moreover, included in this part were questions requiring some background information from the participants, including their names, ages, gender, school year, and information about their usage of English as well as their perceived proficiency levels (Appendix II). The second part contained the actual guidelines in which the interaction was to be conducted. The questions were mostly open-ended and designed to elicit free formulations from the participants about their thoughts and views on motivation in general and motivation to engage in learning English. Aspects taken up included an overarching question requiring each participant to give a general description of motivation, what motivates them to engage in English in school, and a scenario in which they were motivated to engage in learning English. Again, these questions were inspired and adapted from Cardelús’ (2015) interview guide. Moreover, aspects concerning the teacher, tasks, and classroom climate were included in the interview guide Appendix II).

4.3.1 Interview aspects

The aspects teacher, tasks, and classroom climate used in the present study were chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, these aspects were chosen because they have been shown to be important for classroom motivation of L2 learners (Dörnyei & Csizér 1998), and as we see in the previous research and they are related to the theories on motivation. In addition, these specific strategies seemed to embody some of the other motivational strategies in the Ten Commandments list and lastly, they directly and to no small extent address aspects of the dimensions of motivational components, specifically the language, learner, and learning situation. Commandments; (5) increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence and (10) familiarizing learners with the target language culture, pertaining to the learner and language levels are not

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2 For an updated version of this document see Vetenskapsrådet (2017).
covered within these aspects. The former deals with the learner’s characteristics brought to the learning process and the latter deals with ethnolinguistic, cultural-affective, intellectual, and pragmatic values and attitudes attached to the target language. These cover instrumental and integrative motivational elements (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Teacher.** Teacher specific motivational components are, according to Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) related to the teacher’s behavior, personality, and teaching style. This style could inspire affiliative motives amongst learners whereby they want to please the teacher. Moreover, the teacher’s authority type, controlling or autonomy-supporting, and direct socialization of the students through modelling, task presentation, and feedback form these components. Ideally, the teacher is supposed to set an example with his or her behavior by being him or herself, sensitive and accepting. Aspects from the Ten Commandments entailed in this category include (1) Setting a personal example with your own behavior, (4) developing a good relationship with the learners, and (7) promoting learner autonomy.

**Tasks.** Course and tasks specific motivational components are related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching methods, and the learning tasks (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Intrinsic motivation comes into play here in the form of the students’ interests, relevance, and importance of the tasks to personal needs, values and goals, expectancy, and outcome of an activity. The teacher is supposed to present the task(s) properly, give explicit instruction, guide students on task execution, and even state the purpose and utility of every task. Aspects from the Ten Commandments embraced in this category include (3) Presenting the tasks properly, (6) making the language classes interesting (8) personalizing the learning process, (9) increasing the learners’ goal-orientedness.

**Classroom climate.** The component classroom climate, although not specified in Dörnyei & Csizér’s (1998) Ten Commandments, seems to be entailed in group-specific motivational components. Moreover, these components are related to the characteristics of the learner group, and they include goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesiveness, and classroom goal structure (cooperative or individualistic). An aspect from the Ten Commandments covered in this category includes (2) creating a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

Again, the aim of this study is to investigate the students’ perceptions of aspects of classroom motivational strategies. Accordingly, the interview guide was designed to include an overarching question addressed to each participant; “Briefly tell me/ describe your motivation to learn English.” This question required the participants to relate what they think about motivation in English learning and lessons and also as a follow-up question, to describe their motivation with a concrete classroom example. A reason for these questions was to elicit general information regarding perceptions of aspects including personal factors, behavior, and environmental factors on students’ motivation to learn English because there is an interaction between these factors when it comes to motivation (Cardelús 2015; Dörnyei, 2001a). Another reason was just like in
Cardelús’ (2015) study, to prompt and focus students’ introspections on the topic of the interview, motivation. Moreover, it is hoped that the general nature of these questions will elicit responses that might enlighten underlying reasons in the chosen aspects of the study as well as other aspects of motivation. The aspects teacher, tasks, and classroom climate were chosen because, as previously mentioned, they are of vital importance to the motivation of L2 students. Besides, as highlighted in previous research, these aspects go hand in hand in helping a learner reach academic achievement.

**4.4 Participants**

4 participants³ completed this study. All the participants were Swedish lower-secondary students from the same school in a city in Sweden. They were however from different grades (school year). The lower secondary school comprises grades seven through nine. Moreover, in this school, grades 7, 8, and 9 students comprise two parallel groups of approximately 25 students per group. However, grade 9 students were sorted out of the selection because I was their teacher before this study. Vetenskapsrådet (2002) advises that it is unethical to investigate subjects in a dependency position to the researcher, for example, students. Hence, the participants in this study were from grades 7 and 8. The criteria for selection of the participants were; (a) students who are engaged in the classroom, selected for their ability to engage in and inform the investigation (Cohen et al., 2011) (b) students with at least intermediate levels in both Swedish and English, who can steer a conversation. In both cases, help was required from the students’ respective teachers in identifying participants.

The participating students, 3 females and 1 male were aged 12-14. The group dynamic of the participants changed due to a (male grade 8) participant opting out of the interview at the last minute and was replaced by a female (grade 8) participant. Making this change at the last minute was a possibility because I had anticipated the risk of students dropping out of the research due to personal reasons or unforeseen causes, as Dörnyei (2007) warns. Hence, I had two extra participants with signed consent forms, on standby. 2 (grade 7) students reported having English classes twice a week, and 2 (grade 8) students reported having English classes three times a week. 3 students reported having contact with English outside school every day, and 1 had contact with English outside of school at least every week. All the participants reported having advanced English proficiency levels (they all spoke English fluently). Pseudonyms are used in the analysis to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

³ Originally 6, but 2 students withdrew for reasons unknown
4.5 Data analysis

The transcribed interview data was analysed in the following manner. First, I clustered patterns and recurring themes that emerged in the responses of the informants to form subcategories under the focused aspects of investigation (*teacher, tasks, and classroom climate*). Then, I structured the informants’ narratives to describe these subcategories by subsuming them under the major focused categories. In addition, an attempt was made to identify, note, and present the relationships between these subcategories.

For clarity, the emerging (data-driven) categories in this study are:

- Important international language
- Differentiated instruction and choice of material
- Personality trait
- Clear instruction and guidance
- Collaborative and cooperative activities
- Purpose and presentation of tasks
- A prosocial classroom
- Teacher behaviour is paramount

5. Results

This section thematically presents the results from the empirical study. The results highlighting the participants’ general notions of motivation will be presented first. These results stem from the overarching questions “Briefly tell me/ describe your motivation to learn English.” and the question “Describe a situation in which you felt motivated to engage in the ongoing English lesson, what was motivating in that situation?” This initial overview serves as a background to the focused categories *teacher, tasks, and classroom climate*, which are presented and analysed. This is done through a thematic analysis made from recurring themes identified in the participants’ narratives. As previously mentioned, the pseudonyms used in the analysis are as follows; Grade 8 participants: Nancy and Sage and grade 7 participants; Simon and Ava.
5.1 General notions of motivation to learn English

As previously mentioned, the participants were asked to describe their motivation to learn English in order to elicit their general perceptions of motivation. One central theme pointing to extrinsic motivation emerged namely, an important international language.

**Important international language**

The four participants saw English as an important international language, and hence a key factor and incentive for their engagement to learn English. They also perceived English as an important lingua franca, which will aid them in the future. Some instances of this narrative are seen in Nancy and Sage’s comments below:

Nancy: […] vill lära mig engelska för att det är viktigt i framtiden (.) för det är ett internationellt språk

Sage: Min motivation i engelskan är att jag får lära mig, som du har sagt, ett internationellt språk (.) som gör så att ja kan prata med folk, alltså ja kan kommunicera med folk runt om i hela världen

The perceptions of importance of English as an important lingua franca even in Sweden was attributed to the language being widely used in the country and that it is a core subject in the lower secondary school system. Accordingly, the participants seemed to think that however important Swedish is, English appeared to be an important medium of communication that aids intelligibility no matter where they find themselves either in Sweden or even abroad, as is seen in Simon’s comment below:

Simon: [Jag] har många engelska vänner som prata engelska och för att kunna prata med de så måste jag veta engelska och engelska e (.) s-så bra språk eftersom vart du än gå så kommer det finnas en person som prata engelska (.) så du kan prata med dom för att veta (.) om du undrar typ vart den närmsta bussen är, så oftast kan du fråga i engelska därför den personen kan engelska.

Another variant of this is highlighted by Nancy, who, like Simon, seemed to think that learning English is equally essential to promoting intelligibility and communication amongst people even in Sweden. Nancy also seemed to think that the position of English as an “international language” makes it important to her future pursuits, hence causing her to engage in the current process of learning English. She describes this perception in her response below:

Nancy: det e viktigt för mig att kunna engelska för jag kommer stöta på någon som inte förstå svenska, för det är så litet språk jämfört med engelska […]

Interviewer: Även fast i Sverige?

Nancy: Det beror ju på vart man är i landet [Sverige] (.) om jag är kvar här i (.[]. kanses blir det inte lika viktigt men om jag är i andra platser i världen blir det viktigare för som sagt ja kommer träffa andra människor som inte förstå svenska

Interestingly, there is one instance that is at variance with this. Ava says that in addition to English being an “international language”, English is like a “second language” in her (parents’) country Kurdistan and even here in Sweden. Hence, she is motivated to learn it because she wants to and because it gives her a sense of belonging:
5.2 Focused categories

In the following sections, the results from the focused categories *teacher, tasks,* and *classroom climate* are also thematically presented.

5.2.1 Teacher

The focused category teacher was used as an interview question to elicit the participants’ perception of the teacher’s role in motivating them to learn English. Common to the participants’ narratives is a general perception of the teacher as one who motivates students because he or she desires for the students to learn in order to ensure a brighter future. Comments supporting this view are seen in the examples below:

Nancy: Lärarna är viktiga dom ger en motivation för att dom vill att man ska lyckas
Sage: Ja, jag håller med (.) lärarna tar väldigt stor roll i skolan err... sådå det är dom som lära ut å alltså det e dom som måste aså få dig att vilja lära dig så du ska bli nät i framtiden
Ava: Mm... lärarna är typ (.) dom kommer hit för att lära oss, dom kommer inte hit bara för att a:a det är ett jobb å sådär, ja kommer får pengar för det, dom vill att vi ska ha framtiden bättre.
Interviewer: säger du då att det är vad dom vill eller borde göra?
Ava: Nej, dom vill att vi ska lära oss

Notwithstanding, two recurring aspects emerged in the participants’ narratives. These pertained to the teacher’s professional pedagogical skill level and the general qualities of the teacher on a non-pedagogical level. As a result, the two thematic categories that emerged are *differentiated instruction and choice of material* and *personality trait.*

**a) Differentiated instruction and choice of material**

The participants seemed to find that a variation in the mode of instruction and choice of materials made them engage in the lessons. Three out of the four participants perceived a motivating teacher to be one with a diverse skill set and who is good at adopting and offering a wide range of methods to reach every student (didactic competence). Examples are seen in the instances below:

Interviewer: Beskriv en motiverande lärare...?
Simon: Den som lär oss på flera olika sätt så vi alla förstå alltså på engelska, om man lära engelska på ett sätt så kommer inte hela klassen förstå, så va hette, ja tycke våran engelska lärare gör bra genom att testa olika sätt för att lära olika personer.
Ava and Sage’s comments also reveal that they are of the same opinion as Simon:

Ava: Jag tycker samma som Simon att ju mera motiverande ... hon på många sätt visar dem andra för att kanske inte alla gilla samma sak... hur man lär sig, kanske någon gilla å jobba själv å en annan gilla å prata i grupper å sådana

Sage: Err ja håller med å ja tycke att man bör göra såhara olika sätt att få e-en å asså å vilja komma å vilja hänga med å lära sig (.) att man bör switche lite upp såhara å göra nåt annat och som våran lärare gör för det e väldigt många som e intresserade å asså som vill verkligen va med i hennes lektioner å hennes lärosätt, ibland ändra inte egentligen.

Moreover, the participants narrated instances and lessons they had found quite engaging. These lessons had been about the topics of racism, slavery, and colonization. They reported finding these lessons to be quite engaging because of the teaching methods adopted by the teacher. Specifically, they seemed to think that their teachers’ use of visual tools (films and picture) made these particular lessons quite captivating. An example is seen in Nancy’s comment below, where she stresses the importance of the visual:

Interviewer: Du-sni säger att innehållet var fångande men vad det nåt annat i lektionen som gjorde att ni ville engagera?

Nancy: … lärosätet var bra i de lektionerna, hur vi gjorde, för vi kollade på filmer där vi fick se, å så sen vi hade föreläsningar där vi fick- vi se bilder, så vi såg väldigt mycket (.) hade vi läst, hade det inte varit lika fångande men när man ser bilder å videofilmer på hur folk blev behandlad, det e jätte fångande å känslosamt.

As seen in the comment above, Nancy seems to be emphasizing the importance of the visual component in the named lessons. However, Nancy’s comments above also seemed to be indirectly addressing the teacher’s choice of appropriate materials as important to keeping students engaged in the lesson or topic.

Simon, Sage, and Ava thought like Nancy, that a varied and integrated teaching method is key to motivating students. Examples are seen below:

Simon: […] lärosätet var bra, hur vi kollade på film å sen svarade på frågor gjorde att ja känner att ja vet mer istället för att läsa en bok om det [de diskuterade ämnen] och sen svara på frågor

Sage: ...Erm vidare jobbade vi med presentationer om olika ämne i det hela inför klassen och man fick söka information till detta själv, jus den var intressant (.) det blir tråkigt att bara läser från en bok, om en sak eller till exempel lyssna till lärare bara, det blir långtråkigt å folk tappar koncentrationen. När vi gör olika saker fast i samma ämne blir det intressant.

Ava: Mm.. Lärosätet. Jag tycke de var jättebra å diskutera med hela klassen å prata om filmen, vad hände i den å att plus att vi kollade på en film (.) Lektionen var integrading- integrating.

Sage: Mm... ja vill lägga till att vi brukar ha olika sätt, ibland diskutera om olika saker i en cirkel ...er som vi sitter nu och ställer frågor till varandra, ibland har vi skriv inlämningar osv.

Further reflections by Nancy also revealed an interplay between the teaching methods and the teacher. The participants seemed to attribute this diversity of teaching methods to the idea of the teacher being “a good teacher”, one skilled in devising different ways of helping the students find motivation.

Nancy: Yesss, våran lärare är bra på att göra olika lärosätt ibland kolla vi på film, läser böcker så, dom som kanske inte gilla filmer kanske gilla när man läser böcker eller när man presenterar eller skrivuppgifter (.) alla får göra någonting dom är intresserad av.

b) Personality trait
In addition to a motivating teacher being one who adopts differentiated instruction, the participants seem to think that the teacher’s personality is an important aspect required in order to engage and maintain student motivation. The participants’ narratives included perceptions of an empathetic teacher. One that is open, happy, energetic, and even down to earth; qualities which, according to the participants, make them want and dare to engage in the learning process. Examples are seen in the comments below:

Ava: ...Asså en som e energetic and down to earth

Sage: Mmm...someone that is very open and happy because it makes the whole class...everyone is happy as soon as he or she walks in

Nancy: Yeah and [our current teacher] can understand the students more (.) she’s more modern to say...like she knows what we’re going through in our minds and knows how to handle it and how to cope with everything (.) so she’s ready for everything

Nancy: Also someone that’s happy... because small things really make a difference in the morning, we’ve had some teachers that take attendance, tell you what to do and then it’s quiet and we’ve had other teachers that come in the morning are happy and energetic and say good morning class, they’re happy and smiling...

An exciting finding in addition to the above aspects is that the participants also seemed to think that a teacher’s persistence in helping students as well as his or her use of humour goes a long way in keeping students engaged and motivated, as is seen in Simon and Nancy’s comments below:

Simon: I would say one who has a good sense of comedy [humor], like if you can add comedy [humor] to the teaching English then it gets more fun and more people will want to engage in it

Nancy: För mig är den nån som inte ge upp

Interviewer: Nån som inte ge upp, kan du utveckla?

Nancy: Mm... till exempel, om det finns en elev som inte vill utveckla sin engelska, om läraren ger upp då kommer den eleven aldrig bli bättre asså om läraren försöker engagera eleven, hjälpa till å motivera den, till slut kommer eleven andra sig, den kommer vilja lära sig den också

5.2.2 Task

The focused category task was also used as an interview question to elicit the participants’ perceptions of what a motivating task is, in learning English. The thematic categories that emerged in the participants’ narratives are clear instructions and guidance, collaborative and cooperative activities, and purpose and presentation of tasks.

a) Clear instructions and guidance

The participants seemed to think that the way a teacher formulates and gives the instructions to any task is important to students’ motivational processes. The participants perceived clarity and precision of instructions to be one of the most crucial points to get students to undertake a task, as well as keep them motivated to learn English. Personal preferences and interests also seemed to frame participants’ responses. Nancy’s comment below clearly exemplifies this:

Nancy: I-I prefer tasks with v-very clear in-e-instructions, väldigt klara instruktioner för att-e det kan bli väldigt jobbigt när det e ett främmande språk, man kanske inte är säker på vad man ska göra men om läraren e tydlig... säger vad man ska göra (...) så e det mycket bättre(...) jag personligen gillar er själv arbete - ensamarbetes fast de finns vissa som gillar grupparbete (...) a men jag föredrar enskilt arbete...
b) Collaborative and cooperative activities

The participants’ collective narratives also revealed a preference for tasks or activities that are highly collaborative. Specifically, the participants unanimously attested to preferring tasks where they work in groups regardless of the task. Some reasons for this is according to the participants, that such group tasks require them to actively engage with their peers in conversations where they listen to different perspectives and viewpoints and compare notes and thoughts about for instance, the same topic. Some typical instances of this narrative are seen in the examples below:

Sage: Jag föredrar grupparbete för att t.ex. när vi har cirkla [when students sit in a circle and take turns in responding to a question or solving a problem] för att allas kunskaper, asså alla för del av ens kunskap asså när vi diskutera om t.ex. en djup fråga typ va alla tycker å tänker (...) och sedan just om det svaret...om hon ger ett svar...för mig att tänka efter och på olika sätt (...) jag kommer tänka aha det e så...det här kan påverkas! Jag tycket det är bättre på det sättet.

Simon: Det jag tycker om e att jobba med grupper på grund av - va hette desamma som Sage sa, för att när man är i en grupp så vet man hur olika personer tänker. Om jag har en egen tanke och jobba själv, ja kommer vara med min denna tanke men om jag e med grupp så kommer dom andra också har en tanke då kan vi sådara visa både tankarna å sen kolla vilken som e bäst å - det e därför jag tycke att jobba med grupp e bättre.

In addition, the participants prefer group work because of the collective and shared responsibility it requires from the students in the group. According to the participants this shared responsibility makes the burden of the task lighter, and in turn, facilitates reaching the task and eventual lesson goal. A typical example is seen in Sage and Ava’s comments below:

Sage: Mmm... any group work, because er då kan du nå alla kriterier, ensam kan man inte... på skrivdelen asså du får väldigt många delar gjort när du jobba i grupp.

Ava: I prefer presentations... for att när du jobba själv inför en presentation måste du göra allt jobb men när man jobba tillsammans och kommer med flera idéer då e det...oj har du hittat den där, ja hittade den här (...) Man får in olika nyanser och perspektiv i arbetet.

c) Purpose and presentation of tasks

Interestingly, the participants’ narratives seemed to collectively indicate a neutral position as regards the role of the task purpose, or rather activity dynamics and presentation in their motivational processes. The participants unanimously asserted that the aim of the task is irrelevant because activity dynamic is inevitable due to the scope of the curriculum. A typical instance of this is seen in Nancy and Sage’s comments below:

Nancy: Vad gäller typ av uppgift spelar det ingen stor roll vilken färdighet vi tränar i specifika lektioner var en den e speaking, listening... writing, asså vi-läraren kommer alltid göra alla delar för det stå i läroplanen och e så undervisningen gå till. Men läraren borde giuda oss igenom vad vi är än gör och som sagt om läraren är happy, inviting å visa att hen vill hjälpa till då kommer eleverna klara vilken uppgift som helst

Sage: Ja håller med asså uppgiftens syfte spelar ingen roll för vi kommer nån gång under terminen, göra alla delar.

Although the above comments indicate a neutral position as regards the importance of task purpose, type and mode of presentation, the participants perceived that the content of the lesson connected to their subjective experience is of vital importance to their motivational process. Three of the participants exemplified this by relating lessons where they dealt with topics of racism, slavery, and colonization in America and Australia. They attested to these lessons being interesting because the content stirred up emotions, which gave them a sense of connection to the topic, as well as it made them reflect. For example, Simon relates:
Erm Vi kollade på film också [beskriver filmen] å när jag såg det tänkte jag asså tänk om nån gjorde samma sak med mig, det va som att jag fick vara i deras [Australiernas] skor å fick veta hur det va”.

Sage’s comment like Simon’s also reveals this
"det är samma för mig när vi pratade om slaveri. Lektionen fick mig ä tänka efter asså hur skulle det ha varit om det här inte hände, asså känslan var (...) asså den va en tankeställare”.

In addition, an interesting observation is that Nancy seemed not only to attribute the connection she felt in the topic or lesson to her subjective experience but also to her ethnicity (Nancy is of a black African origin). An example of this is seen in Nancy’s comment below. Although Nancy relates further that this made her feel a sense of duty to stand up against oppression, the lessons provided the participants with some historical background about the origin of English.

Interviewer: Du säger att innehållet gjorde att du ville engagera i lektionen. Va det något annat?
Nancy: Exakt. Innehållet var bra och det va jättestor för att jag är svart å kände jag mig att om det händer mot dom så kan det hända mot mig.

Moreover, in addition to the perceptions that the curriculum requirements would somehow guarantee that every skill is treated at some point or lesson, interestingly, the participants seemed to think that the relationship between the teacher and students is more relevant in keeping students motivated than the task being undertaken in the lesson. Accordingly, if the students are happy with the teacher and vice-versa, they will be motivated to engage in whatever task that is given. Examples of this instance are seen in the comments below:

Nancy: […] Men läraren borde guida oss igenom vad vi än görs och som sagt om läraren är happy, inviting å visa att hen vill hjälpa till då kommer eleverna klara vilken uppgift som helst

Ava: Ja håller med det dom har sagt (.) uppgiftens syfte, fast det e viktig e lärarens sätt ännu viktigare för att motivera eleverna. Om läraren är sträng å bry sig inte om eleverna kommer ingen vilja lära sig oavsett om lektionen å materialet e bra

5.2.3 Classroom climate

There seemed to be somewhat of an interplay between the findings of the category classroom climate and teacher. Like the other focused categories, classroom climate was also used as an interview question to elicit the participants’ perceptions of a motivating classroom climate. Emerging patterns in the participants’ narratives resulted in two categories; namely, a prosocial classroom and teacher behavior is paramount. For clarity, a prosocial classroom is meant here as one characterised by “low levels of conflict and disruptive behaviors, smooth transitions from one type of activity to another, appropriate expressions of emotion, respectful communication and problem solving, strong interest and focus on task, and supportiveness and responsiveness to individual differences and students’ needs” (Jennings & Greenberg 2009: 492).

a) A prosocial classroom
The participants’ narratives revealed that they considered a classroom that is characterized by social acceptance and friendship, which is directed by the teacher, important to their motivational process. Some words used to describe this prosocial classroom include a classroom with a pleasant atmosphere, filled with
energetic people, where mistakes are welcome, with a mutually accepted code of behaviour and even where students feel comfortable and safe. The comments below reveal this narrative:

Interviewer: När det gäller klassrumsklimat, vad skulle motivera dig att engagera i lektionen, jag menar vilken typ av klassrumsklimat skulle motivera dig?

Ava: A class filled with energetic people who want to learn. Också en som det finns goda relationer mellan eleverna och lärare å även eleverna emellan

Simon: Ett klassrum som atmosfären är bra (.) där alla respektera varandra och där det borde kunna göras misstag och den [atmosfären] skapas av både läraren och eleverna

Sage: Där man kan göra misstag för alla gör misstag och du lär dig av dina misstag

Nancy: A pleasant classroom will motivate me... erm... men det beror ju på vilken klassrum också. I varje klass- e- i vårt klassrum till exempel, det e en väldigt accepterande miljö så om man gör fel det e inte tillåtet att man skratta fast jag har varit med om vissa andra lektioner och klassrum där folk kan skratta om man säger fel. Så man måste kännas sig bekväm i klassen först.

b) Teacher behaviour is paramount

The participants seemed to think that the teacher and students alike are responsible for creating an excellent prosocial classroom climate. Instances are seen in the comments below:

Interviewer: Okej. Men vem eller vilka bidrar till denna miljö?

Nancy: Mmm... a lot depends on the teacher ...

Simon: It depends on the students and the teacher ...Er fast det borde kunna göra misstag, det beror också på eleverna eftersom ibland om man gör ett misstag, eleverna kommer skratta fast viss vissa elever har respekt så e inte lika taskig (.) alla gör misstag det e ingen stor grej, så att göra ett misstag, acceptera det å försöker göra bättre nästa gång.

Ava: Jag tycker också som Salem t.ex. du säger nåt fel och personer kanske skratta åt dej men det beror på om du känner dig tryggt men du kanske tror att dom skratta åt dej och retar dej men dom skrattar åt dej för att dom tycker att det e roligt, dom skratta på skoj

Notwithstanding, the responses also indicate an overlap between the teacher’s personality traits, his or her leadership and relational competencies and a prosocial climate. The participants seemed to unanimously believe that the teacher is largely responsible for creating such a climate. Examples of these instances are seen in Sage and Nancy’s comments below:

Interviewer: Men vem bär ansvaret, vem eller vilka skapar den här tryggheten?

Sage: Jag tycker att läraren spela väldigt stor roll alltså om läraren e en väldigt bitter person, det tar ju mycket på klassen asså hela energin sjunker, asså viljan till att lära dig något sjunker. Läraren måste vara väldigt ert...emm. e asså em- väldigt öppen så att eleverna ska vilja komma till hen och lära sig. Jag tycker det beror väldigt mycket på (.) men som sagt lärarens personlighet spelar stor roll

Nancy: Mmm... å väldigt mycket beror på läraren den ska vara en som e entusiastiskt, med charisma och vill lära ut å ser eleverna utvecklar inte en som vill bara göra sitt jobb å går därför. Läraren måste asså skapa goda relationer emellan eleverna för om relationen e bra då kommer eleverna känner sig bekväma å kommer vilja engagera i klassen.
6. Discussion

This section discusses the results of this empirical study. The aim of the present study was to investigate sources of students’ motivation to engage in the L2 English classroom. As has been shown, student motivation is a rather complex construct to investigate. Moreover, most previous research in this field (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998) including in a Swedish context (Henry et al., 2018) have to a large extent, focused on the teachers’ perceptions of their motivational practice to ensure the language learners’ motivation. These previous studies have also used questionnaires to elicit responses from the teachers. They have concluded, as has been shown in the previous literature, that the teacher’s actions are essential to creating motivation for their students. Since the focus of the present study is on the students’ perceptions of teachers’ motivational strategies in the L2 classroom, an interview which captures narratives of their experiences was used.

The results of the narratives showed how these four lower secondary school students perceived L2 classroom teaching actions that are motivational. They also highlight how extrinsic motivation affects and even contribute to the students’ motivation to learn English. In the following, the research questions of the study are addressed, and the results are discussed.

What English teaching actions and classroom situation(s) motivate students to engage in the learning process?

The results reveal that the participants perceive the focused categories teacher, tasks, and classroom climate as very important to motivation. They also reveal a close correspondence between findings on these aspects and previous findings. In addition, the eight subcategories that emerged from the narratives; important international language, differentiated instruction and choice of material, personality trait, clear instruction and guidance, collaborative and cooperative activities, purpose and presentation of tasks, a prosocial classroom, and teacher behaviour is paramount, reveal an overlap/interplay between the focused categories.

The findings illustrate that the teacher has an essential role and a strong capacity to impact and mould student motivational levels through a variety of competencies, including didactic, leadership, and relational competences, see section 5.2.3. This is not surprising since teacher-specific motivational components seem to encompass components of both tasks and the classroom climate. The students’ perceptions of a motivating teacher comprised competence in applying a diverse range of relevant materials, variety in
teaching methods, and accommodating personality traits that promote group cohesion. Explicitly, expectations on the teacher’s competence in the subject matter and teaching strategies (didactic competence) imply the teacher’s need for familiarity with the curriculum content in order to meet the language learner’s needs. He or she is also expected to use different appropriate modes of instruction and relevant materials in teaching to make learning engaging. These expectations and perceptions confirm Ryan and Deci’s (2000) assertions that knowledge of versatile ways, which promotes active and volitional forms of extrinsic motivation, causes students to engage in and experience meaningful learning.

However, of these competencies, the leadership and specifically relational competences seemed to be paramount to students’ motivation. The teacher is expected to possess good communication and interpersonal skills that foster good relationships and promote learning. The teacher is expected to be socially and emotionally competent as well as supportive of the students’ learning processes with an unquestionable will and persistence in helping them learn. He or she is also expected to be flexible and adaptable to different challenging and demanding situations that arise in the immediate social classroom, like ensuring the students uphold and adhere to group norms, suggesting strong leadership skills. These findings are in line with previous studies that highlight that the teacher’s behaviour, teaching style, good relationship and rapport with his or her students largely matter and are quite important to promoting and fostering student intrinsic motivation (Andersson 2017; Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Hattie 2009; Jennings & Greenberg 2009; William 2011). Moreover, the finding that highlights a teacher who uses humour in teaching English as quite motivating is also interesting in the present study. Humour was not treated explicitly in the Swedish study on EFL teachers’ descriptions of classroom motivational activities (Henry et al., 2018). However, it was indicated as important to motivation in the teachers’ descriptions of activities. Hence one can conclude that the findings here, along with Henry et al. (2018) claims, confirm that humour is an essential element that could be used to enhance motivation in L2 English learning.

In addition, an overlap is also seen between the students’ perceptions of motivating tasks and teacher’s actions and responsibilities. The students perceived motivating tasks as tasks that are properly presented with clear instructions and guidance from the teacher. This perception confirms the findings highlighted in the Hungarian teacher survey (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Wherein properly presenting tasks through clear instructions, guidance on how to undertake a task, and stating the purpose and utility of the task, was found to be an essential constituent of motivational teaching practice. However, an interesting dissimilarity was found in the present study, and this contrasts with the aforementioned findings. The results on stating the purpose and utility of the task in the present study indicate a neutral effect of this element, making it quite irrelevant to the students’ motivation. A reason for this could be that the students perceived the aim of
particular tasks as irrelevant because activity dynamic is inevitable due to the scope of the content of the curriculum for English, as the narratives revealed.

The students seemed to think that independent of the utility of a current task, the teacher is always going to introduce variation in type of task because the curriculum demands it. This is an interesting perception and could indicate a need for further investigation into how students’ perceptions of the curriculum can inform teachers’ task design. Furthermore, tasks that encouraged cooperation between students were perceived as most motivating. A reason for this, as revealed in the narratives, is that the students find such tasks useful ways to disseminate ideas and knowledge, a platform on which they could partake in the social event of language learning. Another possible reason could be that the students appreciate the experience of clarifying their own understanding to others and vice versa. This experience probably gives them a sense of being responsible for their own learning (self-regulation) and probably a subjective perception of their skills. William (2011) asserts that partaking in collaborative tasks also promotes peer relations and critical thinking amongst students, not to mention group development. The students also saw collaborative tasks as a platform for promoting group cohesion and norms. The narrative revealed that group cohesion, which again, as indicated in the students’ narratives of rapport and good relationship, is also essential to the students in maintaining motivation.

Lastly, this interplay between the components is also evident in the findings of the classroom climate. Accordingly, the students perceive a motivating classroom as one characterised by prosocial behaviours, with positive energy, a helpful and supportive teacher and leader, and peers who together encourage acceptance and friendship. Such classrooms highlight the importance of a teacher’s social and emotional competence in maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Moreover, previous findings have indicated that the teacher’s supportive communicative style and behaviour results in increased intrinsic motivation, which is expressed in students’ enhanced interest, enjoyment, and engagement in the learning process (Noels et al., 1999). Conclusively, as previously mentioned, the teacher’s leadership, didactic, and relationship building skills are expected to thrive in the classroom climate and all other aspects. In the eyes of the students, he or she is (together with the students) responsible for ensuring that the atmosphere in the classroom is pleasant, with thriving group cohesion, but also that the tasks are relevant and exciting and are geared towards maintaining the language learner motivated.

*How does extrinsic motivation affect the students’ engagement in the classroom?*
The research question above was formulated in an attempt to address important nuances in the students’ narratives that are not connected to the focused categories teacher, tasks, and classroom climate. This is because personal factors, behaviour and environmental factors are quite interdependent and interact when it comes to student motivation. The analysis of the narratives revealed a notion that is arguably quite independent of the type of teaching action, tasks or the classroom climate, one that is not directly connected to the happenings in the immediate classroom. This is the perception that English being an important international language, as well as an essential tool for intelligible communication even in Sweden, makes it a driver for the student’s engagement and motivation, an attitude they approach the L2 classroom with. The students also see English as a tool that is important for their future pursuits, highlighting the instrumental goals they relate to learning the language (extrinsic motivation). The focus of the study has been on motivation within the L2 classroom hence this extrinsic motivation has been dealt with in relation to this focus. Nonetheless, we see the same findings in another comparable research. As presented in section 3.1 Cardelús (2015) study of students’ motivational processes in a Swedish context, points out that students are driven by the need to travel and have contact with target language cultures and speakers, as well as being able to communicate in authentic situations. These are instrumental goals that express extrinsic motivation.

This provides confirmation for Ryan and Deci’s (2000) emphasis on the need for educators to familiarise themselves with the different types of extrinsic motivation and what fosters them (see section 2). In this regard, the students’ perceptions of English as an international language that can further their future pursuits, could, in the present study, imply self-endorsed extrinsically motivational goals, which contribute to “the inner acceptance of the value or utility of […] tasks” (Ryan & Deci, 2000:55). This could be said to advance an implication that could be important to teachers’ praxis as well as for further pedagogical research. The teacher’s actions seem not to be entirely independent of other instrumental goals students have for learning English, and teaching students without knowledge of these goals could pose a considerable challenge for educators’ motivation endeavours. Hence, knowing the perceived instrumental goals that students have for learning an L2 could help teachers better form and adopt autonomy-supportive styles and practices (William, 2011), which can be useful in fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in students.
7. Conclusion

These concluding remarks address some further implications of the results of the study. Moreover, finally, there are some observations on methodology, which are also addressed. This study set out to investigate students’ perceptions of motivational actions that cause them to engage in the L2 English classroom. By answering the two research questions: What English teaching actions and classroom situation(s) motivate students to engage in the learning process? and How does extrinsic motivation affect students’ engagement in the classroom? the study showed that the teacher possesses an extreme capacity to impact students’ motivation through a variety of competencies, including didactic, leadership, and relational competences, which are reflected in his or her teaching practices of differentiated instruction and autonomy-supportive style and behaviour. In addition, these practices are in the present study perceived as inseparable from the teacher’s character and personality trait. Hence, this implies that L2 English teachers must consider the quality of their teaching practices as well as their behaviour and style in order to enhance student’s motivation and make learning goals reachable.

In addition, the study showed that we seem to have reason to assume that these participants place a significant value on the instrumental goals of the language as they do the teacher’s style and behaviour and the actual classroom setting and activities. A conclusion that can be drawn from the above results is that the teacher’s motivational practices can only go as far as affecting students’ motivation within the context that the immediate classroom and school allow. This is because the other instrumental aspect of motivation mentioned in the present study seemed to be of equally vital importance, as is revealed in the students’ narratives. For example, the students talk about English being an important international language that is important for their future pursuits. In addition to this, it seems that when they give account of the teaching materials and tasks they find motivating, they make a correlation (draw a parallel) to the instrumental goal or gain of the task and not just the learning. Therefore, a question this raises, which could be a possible area for further research is that given that directly reaching certain instrumental goals like career and job choices are to some extent beyond the control of the immediate teaching actions, how can the teacher use knowledge of students’ instrumental goals to frame teaching actions and situations that would motivate the language learner?

In conclusion, despite the attested findings, this study has some limitations in methodology. Again, since the focus of the present paper has been to illustrate students’ perceptions of motivational actions that cause them to engage in learning English, the narratives of four students were used to address this aim. One limitation here is that the participants in this study constituted a small sample and might not be
representative of the L2 English group. Moreover, the results might be specific to this group of students and not to a group that is universal to learning L2 English. Hence, it is assumed that with a diverse range of participants, a higher number of participants, and even a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative), more comprehensive results can be achieved in further studies. Nonetheless, the findings presented in the present study conclude that understanding students’ perceptions of the motivational strategies teachers adopt and use in their L2 classrooms could help teachers implement effective strategies to meet the language learner’s needs. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can contribute to a better understanding of enhancing L2 English learners’ motivation.
References


Hej vårdnadshavare och elever,


Syftet med detta är att försöka ta reda på vad som motiverar och engagerar elever till inlärning av engelska. Elevernas tankar om hur de kan motiveras att engagera i skolan/engelska är viktiga för deras lärande av språket. Därför hoppas vi att genom denna studie kunna bidra med ökad kunskap om detta. Jag har valt genomföra studien i grundskolans högstadium eftersom det är inriktningen på min utbildning.


Om du har några frågor är du välkommen att kontakta mig via e-post: careana002@yahoo.com, telefon: 076 – 05 06 707 eller min handledare Tore Nilsson, vid Institutionen för språkdidaktik, Stockholms universitet (e-post: tore.nilsson@isd.su.se)

Stockholm 2019-11-10

Med vänlig hälsning,

Carina Awaiko Westin
Lärarstudent Åmneslärautbildning,
Stockholms universitet.
Rektors tillstånd att genomföra studie om engelskundervisning på Husbygårdsskolan, hösten 2019

Jag ger härmed Carina Awaiko Westin tillstånd att genomföra en studie om engelskundervisning på Husbygårdsskolan, höstterminen 2019

Namn: __________________________________________
Tjänstetitel: __________________________________
Datum och underskrift: ..............................................................

Samtycke för deltagande i studien ovan, hösten 2019

- **Namn på vårdnadshavare 1:**
  
  [ ] Jag tillåter mitt barn att delta i denna studie.
  [ ] Nej, jag tillåter inte mitt barn att delta i denna studie.

  Datum och underskrift: ..............................................................

- **Namn på vårdnadshavare 2:**

  [ ] Jag tillåter mitt barn att delta i denna studie.
  [ ] Nej, jag tillåter inte mitt barn att delta i denna studie.

  Datum och underskrift: ..............................................................

- **Elevens namn och klass:**

  [ ] Ja, jag vill delta i denna studie.
  [ ] Nej, jag vill inte delta i denna studie.

  Datum: ..........................................................................................
Interview guide- HT 2019

Questionnaire:

The focus of this study is to find out sources of students’ motivation to engage in learning English. The interview will consist of two parts. In the first part, you will fill out a questionnaire containing basic facts about you including your name, age, grade and your usage of English/perceived language proficiency level. We will then proceed to discuss the accompanying questions in the second part.

**Note:** Do not forget to fill out the details below

PART I:

1) **Gender:**
   - a). male
   - b). female
   - c). other

2) **Age:**

3) **Year:**

4) **How often do you have English classes during the week?**
   - a) once a week
   - b). twice a week
   - c). three times a week

5) **How often are you in contact with English outside school? (reading, watching, listening, writing)**
   - a) everyday
   - b) every week
   - c). once a week
   - d). more than once a week
   - e). rarely

6) **What would you say is your proficiency level in English?**
   - a). beginner
   - b). intermediate
   - c). advanced
PART II:
In this part, you are to answer the questions in the format of free formulations of your thoughts. **Remember** that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

**Start up:** Ask **each student** what he or she thinks about motivation in English lessons. Make sure each student talks, before we go into the group discussion.

1) Think of a situation where you felt eager to involve and participate in the lesson (an engaging lesson) or where you felt captured in the learning moment, can you describe it? What was motivating in that situation or lesson?

2) In terms of motivation, what engages you in the English lessons? Use the prompters below to help you in your description(s).

   a. Teacher: What is a motivating (English) teacher? What does the teacher do that motivates you? Can you give examples?

   b. Tasks: What types of tasks, topics or activities would you enjoy engaging in (e.g. pair or group work) what specific aspects of these tasks, topics or activities would you enjoy and appreciate best and why? (For example, would you prefer tasks with clear instructions, guidance on how to do the task, one with a clearly stated purpose for the task, etc.)

   c. Classroom climate: what would motivate you to engage in the classroom or what would cause you to engage in the classroom/lesson? What type of classroom climate would motivate you? (E.g. How is the atmosphere and mood in this classroom? Is it okay to make mistakes here, encouraging and pleasant atmosphere, etc.)