



Estetisk-filosofiska fakulteten

Daniel Dijkstra

Motivation and English as a foreign language
Motivation among Swedish upper secondary school students

Engelska
C-uppsats

Termin: Vårterminen 2009
Handledare: Moira Linnarud

Abstract

Titel: Motivation and English as a foreign language: Motivation among Swedish upper secondary school students

Författare: Daniel Dijkstra
Engelska C, 2009

Antal sidor: 26

Abstract: In order to be able to influence the motivation of second language learners one first has to understand what motivation is, what its preconditions are and how to detect it. The research for this essay was done with the help of one hundred and ten students from seven classes in two different upper secondary schools and most of these learners were first year students.

The aim was to find and measure the students' motivation to learn English and how this motivation can be influenced in a positive manner. The method used to collect the necessary data was a questionnaire which asked questions about the relevancy of the English course and how frequently the students used English and how interested they were in the language.

The results give a clear picture of the students' motivational levels as well as to which parts of the English course they respond and to which they do not.

Nyckelord: Motivation, second language learning, teaching

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Background	2
2.1 Indicators of motivation	2
2.2 Types of motivation	2
2.3 Values/attitudes as a precondition of motivation	3
2.4 Influences on motivation	4
3. Method	6
4. Results	7
4.1 Introducing the results	7
4.2 Overall score	9
4.3 The Business and Administration Program (Hp), first year students.....	9
4.4 The Natural Science Program (Nv2), second year students.....	11
4.5 The Natural Science Program (Nv1), first year students	13
4.6 The Vehicle Program (Fp), first year students	14
4.7 The Construction Program (Bp), first year students	16
4.8 The Health Care Program (Op), first year students.....	17
4.9 The Electricity Program (Ec), first year students	18
4.10 The individuals.....	20
4.11 A comparison	21
4.12 Summary	21
5. Conclusions	22
6. Discussion	22
Sources	24
Appendix	25

1. Introduction

“**motivation**... a feeling of enthusiasm or interest that makes you determined to do something...”

(MacMillan English Dictionary 2002:975)

Many factors play a role in second language acquisition. The students have to have the will and drive to learn and feel that the studies are relevant to them, they have to feel supported by their parents and teachers and feel safe in their place of learning, in short they have to be motivated to learn. The learner's attitude towards the target language is also vital since these values can be deeply rooted and have a devastating effect on the studies if they are negative in nature.

There have been many studies done on the importance of motivation over the years and Dörnyei, one of the more contemporary scholars who has carried out research in the field of motivation and second language acquisition, states that "Language teachers frequently use the term 'motivation' when they describe successful or unsuccessful learners. This reflects our intuitive - and in my view correct - belief that during the lengthy and often tedious process of mastering a foreign/second language (L2), the learner's enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure." (Dörnyei 2001a:5).

How does one define something as elusive as motivation, something that can change from one day to the next? This paper will explore the motivational levels of Swedish upper-secondary-school students of the English language and to what extent some in class elements influence these levels.

2. Background

2.1 Indicators of motivation

Four indicators of motivation are; choice of tasks, effort, persistence and achievement (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:11-13). Choice of task means that the student chooses an exercise, and since the exercise is chosen voluntarily it would seem natural that there exists a high level of motivation to complete the task. If the task is difficult the effort and persistence put into completing the task by the student would also be an indication of high motivation, and students who spend time and effort on difficult tasks should achieve greater proficiency.

Choice of task can indicate in what areas the student's motivation lies but is ironically a poor guide since free choice is rare or limited in school.

Effort is a clear indicator of motivation. A student that is eager to learn will spend more effort on understanding instruction and solving tasks. The student is also more likely to adapt old knowledge to the new task in order to solve it. Constructive feedback that links students' effort to achievement has a positive effect on motivation.

Persistence is a good way to measure motivation. Learners that persist at solving exercises despite difficulties are often highly motivated and persistence often leads to better results.

Achievement is more of a result of student motivation. Motivated students are usually awarded higher grades than unmotivated ones but using achievement as a direct measurement of motivation can be risky since it does not take into consideration the fact that the student may have a high proficiency level but lack motivation.

2.2 Types of motivation

Research points to two major categories of motivation and they are called integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (Gardner 1972:12-16).

The integratively motivated student has a desire to learn a language because of an ability to identify with and admire the culture that speaks the language (Gardner 2001:5) or even a desire to move to a country where the targeted language is spoken (Dörnyei 2001a:16).

When the students' only interest in the language is a desire to improve their working conditions, just to get a passing grade or because they are expected to at least know the basics of the language, they are driven by what is called instrumental motivation. Instrumentally motivated students usually lack the will to get an in-depth-understanding of the language since the student only sees the language as a tool and lacks the ability to identify with its speakers (Gardner 1972:12-16). Many educators only see a need to connect the tasks they give at lessons to the students' daily lives and then their work is done (Dörnyei 2001a:56). This is overly simplified however since "home English" may not be the English the students are interested in learning.

When dealing with final grades it can be hard to distinguish between these two kinds of students but one study shows that the oral skills of the integratively motivated students surpass those of the instrumentally motivated ones (Gardner 1972:57).

So students can be motivated for different reasons depending on what they feel are the most valued aspect of their language studies. The type of motivation that drives them affects their proficiency.

2.3 Values/attitudes as a precondition of motivation

"Attitude is linked to an individual's set of values and may be influenced by many factors."
(Chambers 1999:26).

The fact that students need to be able to identify with the culture of the target language at some level or feel a need to be able to use the language (Dörnyei 2001a:14-15) explains why many Swedish students so quickly lose their proficiency in the classic Swedish L3s, German, French and Spanish, when they no longer study them at school, while their proficiency in English remains at a high level throughout their lives because of exposure and relevance.

How the students value their English studies, or any subject at all, can be separated into three separate value sets; intrinsic, integrative and instrumental value (instrumental value is called extrinsic value by Schunk, Pintrich & Meece (2008:238)) and reflects what the students value in the English classes rather than why they are motivated to learn the language (Dörnyei 2001a:51-56). Intrinsic value is connected to the students' feelings of interest and enjoyment of the English course itself. When a student's feeling of interest in the English classes has been achieved because of an understanding of and an

interest in foreign cultures the student has what is called integrative value in the class. When students have realized the practical benefits of their language studies and value their English classes because of it, they have attained instrumental values.

Students that cannot connect the English they learn in English class with their future careers, are not the least bit interested in English culture and find the classes boring are not likely to receive a good grade at the end of the course. On the other hand students that enjoy themselves in class and realize the practical benefits of knowing the language will strive to excel and will most likely receive a good grade. In a comparison between with students with intrinsic and extrinsic values tests have indicated that the students with intrinsic values reach better results (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:238).

2.4 Influences on motivation

Although the students are hopefully already driven by one kind of motivation there are several other factors that play an important part in maintaining their willingness to learn; the student-teacher, teacher-parent and parent-student interaction, the classroom environment, stimulating exercises and of course the feeling of success (Dörnyei 2001a:31-57). As is also stated by Chambers, "...a pupil who regards foreign language learning as useful and/or enjoyable and who feels encouraged by, for example, parents to learn foreign languages, being more likely to feel positively motivated to participate in the learning process." (Chambers 1999:26).

An important influence on learners' motivation that may seem obvious to most is the teacher's effect on the students' willingness to learn (Dörnyei 2001a:34). If the teacher displays a negative attitude towards certain elements in the curriculum or to the subject as a whole this is a sure way to influence the students negatively. It may be hard to be equally positive to all of the elements that language studies contain since teachers are only humans with interests and specialties of their own but it is important to realize that the emotions they display will have an effect on the students, positive or negative as it may be.

In reality the teachers' influence on their students' motivation starts as early as in the planning of the lesson (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:331-332), since the students' characteristics, motivational type and pre-existing motivation levels have to be taken in consideration. The matter of giving praise and criticism are also important decisions with impact on students' drive. Praise should not be given too often nor too seldom or else it will lose its positive influence. Criticism can be a positive enhancer as long as it is not given too

often. Chambers (1999:35) also states that the relationship between the teacher and the students shapes the character of the learning situation which is yet another influence on motivation.

The teachers' expectations are yet another important factor, not just their expectations of the students' achievements but of the teacher's own ability to actually educate and help the students. If a teacher believes in the students' abilities chances are that they will actually manage to perform well since the teacher gives them the support they need. The need for educators to have a healthy belief in their own abilities manifests itself in the way they plan their lessons. A confident teacher is more prone to plan tasks that are challenging for the students and actually allow them to develop their skills (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:331-332).

Parental influence is important since even if they help their children with their homework their attitude towards the language is blatantly clear to their children (Dörnyei 2001a:39). Since children and young adults are easily susceptible their parents' attitude may rub off on them and they will no longer see English as an important tool of communication but as an unnecessary subject they just have to pass in order to get a grade. In reality this means that parents should not only help their children with their homework, they should also be enthusiastic about it. The friends the students socialize with in their spare time are another influence on their academic motivation. If the friends are academically oriented it is more than likely that student will also be focused on school aligned goals since young adults feel a need to adjust to the norms of their group (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:297).

The classroom environment should be supportive (Lightbown & Spada 2006:64-65) but it can be harsh and teenagers are by nature unsure of themselves. If they do not feel secure enough to try and to make mistakes in the classroom, their learning capability and motivation will decrease. Since this issue mostly has to do with trust between the students it is important that the teacher shows them that it is acceptable to make mistakes and that by making them you can actually learn something. The teacher also has to make sure that the criticism he or she gives is positive, constructive and friendly, and that the peer response follows these guidelines as well.

It has been suggested that students find tasks that have some roots in real life more meaningful and motivating (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:328). This fact is also confirmed by Chambers who states "If pupils fail to see the relationship between the activity and the world in which they live, then the point of the activity is likely to be lost on them" (Chambers 1999:37). It can be argued that the exercises should be focused on areas that

concern the pupils' future careers since they should be interested in anything that might help them get ahead in their professions. Another viewpoint would be that the students already focus too much attention on their post-graduation jobs and would be more motivated to engage in tasks that are more daily life oriented instead.

Students often measure their learning by how successful the outcome of their tasks is (Dörnyei 2001b:97) and a successful outcome increases their motivation. However learners with low self-confidence see difficult tasks as threats and fail to focus on how to solve them. This lack of confidence in their own abilities mean that they give up on difficult tasks all too easily (Dörnyei 2001b:23) which in turn relates back to two of the indicators of motivation, persistency and effort. In school the ultimate reward given to students are grades and the constant pursuit of higher marks can lead to goal oriented learning which affects the learning oriented students negatively (Dörnyei 2001b:136).

3. Method

The investigation reported here was carried out at two upper-secondary schools in western Sweden. A total of one hundred and ten students divided over seven classes participated in the study and they represent both programs that prepare for further studies and programs that prepare for work directly after graduation. The programs that are represented are the first year of the construction, electricity, health care and vehicle programs and the first year students of the natural science and business and administration programs as well as one of the second-year classes of the natural science program. The English courses at one of the schools are completed in a shorter time than they are at the other school due to work-training periods.

The questionnaires were administered to the students in the abovementioned classes and most students took the task very seriously. Only two questionnaires had to be removed afterwards, one because of a clearly unserious attitude and the other because the student seemed to have missed that the questionnaire consisted of two pages. The questionnaire itself focuses on the different kinds of motivation, through the questions about feelings about English speaking cultures, including the preconditions of motivation and what is needed to maintain their motivation levels. The major emphasis of the questions is on how relevant the students feel that their English classes are to their private- and working life. The students are also asked about how comfortable they feel in their learning environment, if they

feel challenged by their studies and if they feel that their grades correspond with the amount of time and focus they put into their studying. The students were able to grade their answers on a scale from one to ten where one equals never or not at all and ten equals always or very often.

For the investigation to be as representative as possible there was a need to involve both students that were studying for work directly after graduation and students that were studying to qualify for further studies, since in many cases the two groups are studying English for different reasons.

4. Results

4.1 Introducing the results

In table 1 the results are presented for each class together with the total mean value for all the students' answers. These total mean values will be used as points of reference to indicate if the values calculated for the classes are high or low. In the figures, which are presented for each class, the lowest and highest answer is given as well as the mean value. This shows the spread of the answers to be found in each class.

The answers to the questions about gender, course level and if the students expect to use English in their future careers are not referred to in the table and the figures. Question 4 is ignored throughout the results section due to the overall low scores it was given by the students that participated in the study. The low scores suggest that the question lacks significance in the context of the students' motivational levels. As mentioned in the Method section, the answers to questions 1 to 14 are gradable on a scale from 1 to 10 and the questionnaire in full can be seen in the Appendix.

List of questions:

- Q1 Do you read English often?
- Q2 Do you speak English often?
- Q3 Do you write in English often?
- Q4 Have you spent time in an English speaking country?
- Q5 How do you feel about American culture?
- Q6 How do you feel about British culture?
- Q7 Do you feel challenged by your English studies?
- Q8 How interested are you in improving your English skills?
- Q9 Do you feel comfortable with speaking English in front of your teacher?
- Q10 Do you feel comfortable with speaking English in front of your classmates?
- Q11 Do you feel that the tasks given in the English class are relevant for your personal life?
- Q12 Do you feel that the tasks given in the English class are relevant for your future career?
- Q13 Do you feel that the grades you are given for exercises correspond with the level of effort you put into doing them?
- Q14 Do you feel that the grades you are given for tests correspond with the level of effort you put into studying for them?

4.2 Overall score

The overall mean score for all questions, except question 4, is above 5, the score that is to be seen as the norm in this study.

Table 1. The overall mean values for each question and the mean values for each class.

	Overall norm	Hp mean	Nv2 mean	Nv1 mean	Fp mean	Bp mean	Op mean	Ec mean
Q1	6.1	4.6	6.1	7.6	4.4	6.7	4.3	6.9
Q2	5.4	6.3	5.2	5.9	4.2	5.3	4.9	5.2
Q3	5.5	5.4	4.2	5.9	4.7	6.2	5.2	6.3
Q4	2.6	3.5	3.0	2.2	2.9	3.0	3.1	1.9
Q5	5.7	6.2	5.8	4.5	6.6	6.5	5.3	6.2
Q6	5.5	5.2	5.4	6.4	4.3	5.3	5.3	5.6
Q7	5.2	5.8	3.4	4.9	5.2	5.6	5.1	6.0
Q8	7.0	7.4	8.6	7.9	5.6	6.3	7.0	5.8
Q9	6.0	6.3	6.5	6.4	5.1	5.5	5.8	6.0
Q10	5.8	5.8	7.2	6.2	3.7	5.9	5.6	5.8
Q11	5.3	5.5	4.1	5.9	5.1	5.2	5.9	5.3
Q12	6.0	6.2	4.6	6.3	5.5	6.1	7.0	6.5
Q13	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.4	5.7	5.9	7.2	5.9
Q14	6.1	6.1	5.8	6.5	5.8	6.0	7.0	6.0

The students' willingness to improve their proficiency is the most noticeable property shared by most of the students as seen by the high score, 7.0, on question 8. Other attributes that have a high score are the time spent reading in English, their sense of security when speaking English in front of their teachers, the fact that they feel that the exercises they are given in class are relevant for their future careers and the sense that the grades they are given are deserved which can be seen in the answers to questions 1, 9 and 12-14.

4.3 The Business and Administration Program (Hp), first year students

In this class a total of 13 students participated in the study, 8 of them female and 4 of them male and since they are first year students most of them are still in the English A course. 9 of the students, about 69%, answered that they expected to use English in their future careers.

As seen in table 1 by the Hp students' average answers to questions 1-3 the students use the language in a varied way and they do so often. The students do, however,

read less in English than the students in general but they speak English more often and the mean answer to question 3 is very close to the overall score, as seen in table 1. It is impossible to tell in what context they write, read or talk English but for the purpose of this investigation the fact that they use it, no matter through what media, is what is most important. The answers to questions 5 and 6, see table 1, tell us that the students' feeling of admiration towards American culture, 6.2, is larger than towards British culture, 5.2. This could indicate that learning material that focused more on American English instead of British English would have a greater impact on the students' motivational levels. The answer to question 7, if the learners feel challenged by their studies, is high since it exceeds the norm, 5.8 where the overall mean is 5.2. As the answer is in the upper part of the scale it would imply that the exercises are kept at a level that stimulates learning, since too easy exercises can lead to a stagnation of learning. The high scores given to question 9 and 10 show that there is a feeling of security when speaking English in the classroom but more so when speaking in front of the teacher. The course is presented in a way that is more inclined to favor working life than personal life as seen in the answers to question 11 and 12 and questions 13 and 14 shows that the students accept the grades they are given even if they feel that they could have been higher as seen in table 1.

In the context of motivation question 8 is the most straightforward in the questionnaire. The mean value for question 8 is 7.4 which is slightly higher than the overall norm, 7.0. The spread between the answers to each question within the class is wide but the mean values are high as can be seen in figure 1. The high score on question 8 together with the high number of students that expected to use English in their jobs indicates that the students in this class are motivated to increase their English skills.

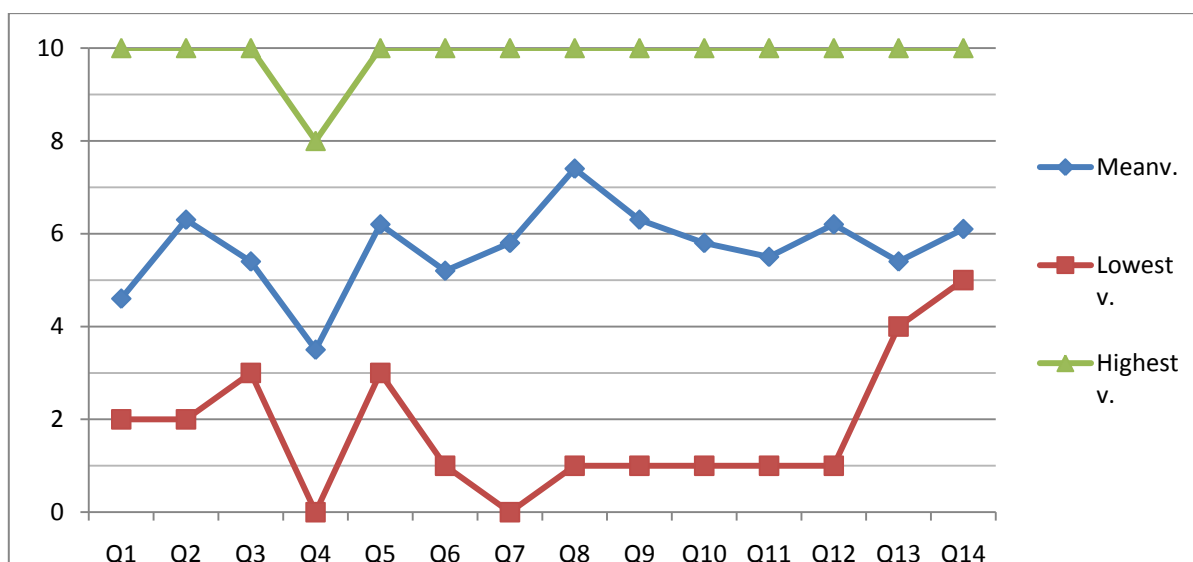


Figure 1. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Hp students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.4 The Natural Science Program (Nv2), second year students

The students in this class that answered the questionnaire were 14 in total. 9 of the students were female and 5 were male and all of them expect to use English in their postgraduate jobs and all of them, except two who have progressed to the C-course, are at the B-stage of their English studies.

By looking at the scores on questions 1-3, see table 1, it is clear that this group is also rather balanced in their practicing of their English skills even if their reading skills, question 1, seem to take precedence over their writing skills, question 3, which scored below average. As with the Hp class this group also favors American culture over British even if the difference is smaller and closer to the average values than the Hp classes' results. In contrast with the Hp class however this B-level group does not feel challenged by the difficulty level of their studies, the question scored 3.4 for the class which is far below the average of 5.2. This low score may lead to a loss of interest and therefore motivation. The students feel confident speaking in front of both the teacher and their classmates and the class scored well above average on both questions. Relevance, both in personal and professional life, is lacking however, see table 1 questions 11 and 12, and both scores are well below the average. Some individuals disagree and definitely feel that the course material is relevant and this can be seen by the spread of the highest and lowest recorded answers in figure 2. The students feel that

their grades compared with their work effort are fine but could be higher, as. The answers, 6.3 to question 13 and 5.8 to question 14, are close to the norm and above 5 but not high enough to indicate full satisfaction with their grades.

All of the students are interested in improving their language skills; the lowest recorded answer to question 8 is 6 as seen in figure 2, which is only logical since they all recognized the need to be adept at the English language in their future careers.



Figure 2. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Nv2 students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.5 The Natural Science Program (Nv1), first year students

27 first year students in the natural science program participated in this study and 14 of them were female and 13 of them were male. 89% of them expect to use English in their future careers and all of them are studying at the English A-level.

In this class the students spend a lot of time reading, writing and speaking English as can be seen in the high scores on questions 1, 2 and 3 in table 1. The scores are 7.6, 5.9 and 5.9 which are all above the norm. The learners' attitude towards American culture, question 5, is more negative than the earlier classes and the norm but their opinion of British culture, question 6, is higher than the two previous classes' and the overall norm. On question 7, how challenged they felt by their English studies, the spread was very wide, ranging from 0 to 10, see Q7 in figure 3, and the mean value landed on 4.9 which is only 0.3 points below the overall norm. Most of the students felt comfortable with speaking in front of the class with a higher degree of confidence in speaking English in front of the teacher than in speaking in front of their classmates as noted by the scores of questions 9 and 10 in table 1. The answers to questions 11 and 12 are higher than the overall norm and shows that the students feel that their studies are more relevant for their future professional lives than their personal lives even if the difference is small. Most of the pupils feel that the feedback and grades they receive correspond with the time they have spent on tasks and with the effort they have put into studying for tests. As before the students can be said to be satisfied but not overly so.

Most of the learners had a high interest in improving their proficiency, see question 8 on table 1, and as can be seen in figure 3 no single student is totally disinterested in improving their skills and this indicates that the motivational levels of the individuals in this class are high.

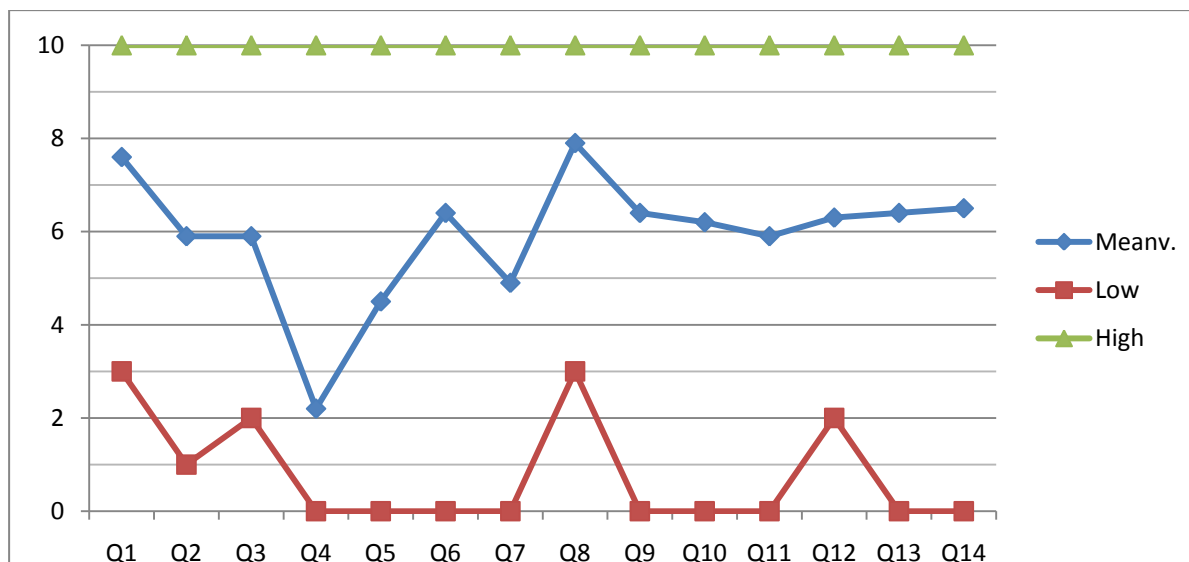


Figure 3. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Nv1 students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.6 The Vehicle Program (Fp), first year students

A total of 14 students in this class, 12 males and 2 females, answered the questionnaire. They are all studying at the A-level and 71% of them foresee a need for English skills in their future careers.

This group of learners does not spend much of their spare time practicing their English skills. The calculated mean values of the answers given to question 1, 2 and 3 are all below the norm and 5 as can be seen in table 1. There are however some individuals that break the pattern. Note highest registered scores given to questions 1-3 in figure 4. The class is more impressed by American- than British culture. Question 5 scored 6.6 and question 6 scored 4.3. The score for question 5 is well above the norm and the score for question 6 is well below the norm and this may be connected with the nature of the program itself since the US have more famous and popular makes of cars than Britain. The students seem to be healthily challenged by their studies as noted by the 5.2 score on question 7, which matches the overall norm. The relatively high lowest score on the same question in figure 4 also shows that the highly proficient students are being challenged. The students' interest in improving their skills is varied but none lacks the will completely which can be seen in the answer to question 8 in figure 4 and in the mean value of 5.6 even if this is low compared to the overall norm, see table 1. The class as a whole feels much more comfortable speaking English in

front of the teacher than speaking in front of their classmates. Their security in speaking in front of their teacher scored 5.1 and their security in speaking in front of the class scored 3.7. Both answers are well below the overall norm as can be seen in table 1. On the questions about relevancy, questions 11 and 12, the scores are 5.1 and 5.5 which means that the students feel that the studies are more oriented towards their future careers than their personal lives. The mean value for question 13, if the students feel that their grades correspond with their work effort, is 5.7 and the value for question 14, if their grades correspond with time spent studying for tests, is 5.8 which mean that the students are satisfied with their grades. By examining the spread of the answers to the same questions in figure 4 it can be seen that no single student was completely displeased with his or her grade.

This class as a whole seems to see a need for English in their future careers and they are not disinterested in improving their proficiency which can be understood by their 5.6 score to question 8. However they do not use or practice their skills at home at a regular basis as can be confirmed by reading the results to questions 1-3 in table 1.

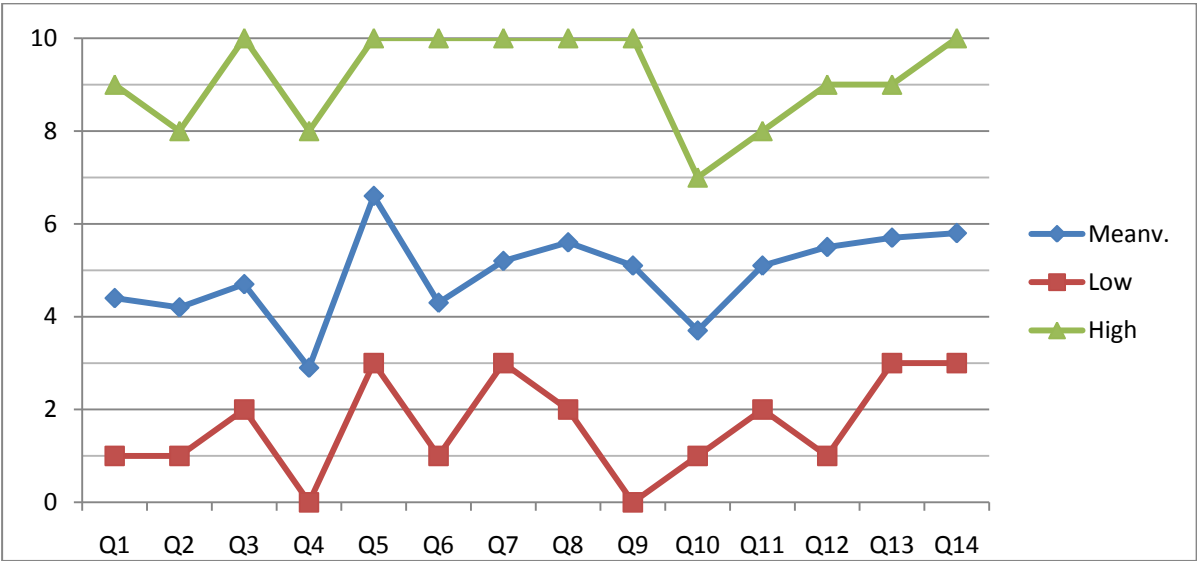


Figure 4. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Fp students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.7 The Construction Program (Bp), first year students

11 students of the first year of the construction program participated in the survey. 10 of them were male and one of them was female. 82% of them recognize the need for proficiency in English in their future careers.

The students in this class speak, read and write English fairly often, as seen by the scores on questions 1-3 in table 1 where the mean values are above or close to the overall norm value. The students' interest in American cultures is above the norm which can be seen in their 6.5 score as opposed to the norm value of 5.7. The interest in British culture is slightly below the norm, 5.3 as opposed to 5.5. As with most of the classes that participated in this survey the students in this class feel that the difficulty of the course is at a suitable level since the class norm is 5.6 which can be compared to the norm value 5.2. Unlike most of the classes in this survey this group feels more comfortable speaking in front of their classmates than their teacher which can be seen in their 5.9 score on question 10 in contrast to their 5.5 score on question 9. The difference may seem marginal but when looking at figure 5 it can be seen that at least one student feels completely uncomfortable when speaking in front of the teacher. When comparing questions 11 and 12 it can be stated that the general feeling of the students is that the course is more work life related than adaptable to their personal lives. The class' scores of 5.2 for question 11 and 6.1 for question 12 are so close to the norm that distinguishing them is impossible, see table 1. The class scored 5.9 to question 13 and 6.0 to question 14 and this implies that they are satisfied with their grades, the scores are also close to the overall norm values as can be seen in table 1.

This class has a high motivational level. 82% foresaw a need for English in their work after school- The answer to if they were interested in improving their proficiency was 6.3 and the answers to the question of how often they read, speak and write in English were also high, see questions 1-3 in table 1.

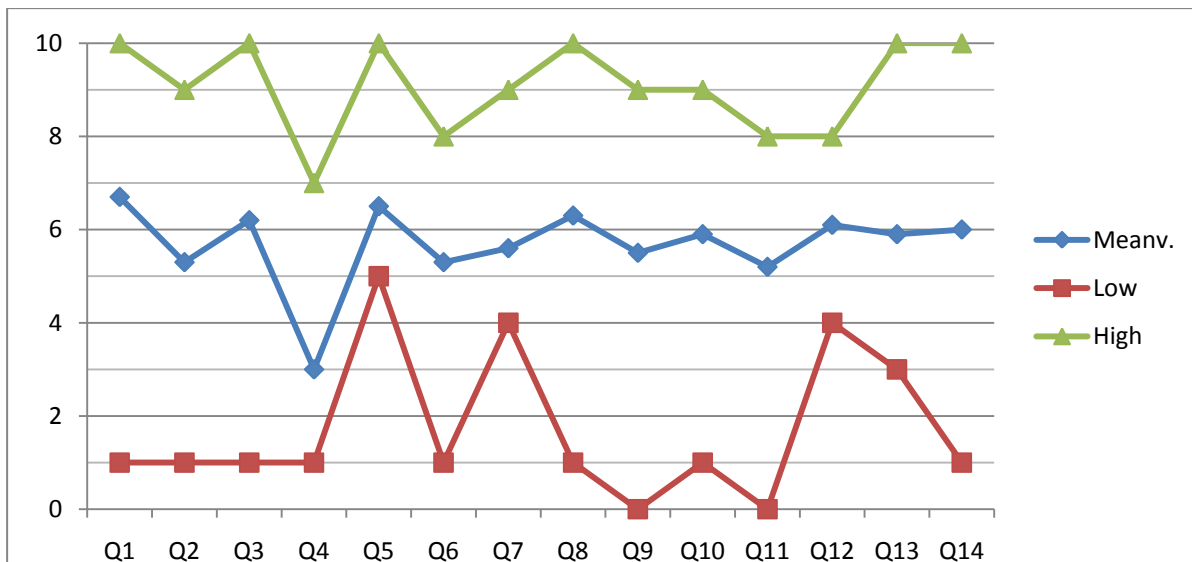


Figure 5. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Bp students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.8 The Health Care Program (Op), first year students

The 11 students of this class were all female and 91% of them answered that they expect to use English in their future careers.

When asked about how often they use their English skills the students in this class speak and write English more frequently than they read it. This can be seen in table 1 where the scores for question 2 and 3 are close to the overall norm but question 1 is lower. They regard both American and British culture with the same degree of interest. Note a 5.3 score on both questions in contrast to the norm values of 5.7 and 5.5 in table 1. The course maintains a degree of difficulty that matches the overall norm score of 5.1 and this level should keep the students motivated. When the students were asked about how comfortable they feel when speaking in front of their teacher their mean answer 5.8, which in table 1 question 9 can be seen to be close to the norm value of 6.0, indicates that they feel secure when speaking English with the teacher. The answer to how secure they feel when speaking English in front of their classmates their score is 5.6 as opposed to the norm of 5.8. This is almost identical to the degree of security they feel when speaking in front of their teacher. The course itself was relevant to their personal life, the score of 5.9 is very close to the overall norm of 6.0. The course material is even more relevant to their future careers than their personal lives, the score for question 12 was 7.0. On the whole the class is also very content

with their grades with their grades for assignments, the score is 7.2 and the grades they receive on their tests, the score is 7.0. The score on questions 13 and 14 are both well above the overall norm.

This class is highly motivated, most of the students are at least moderately interested in improving their skills which is illustrated in figure 6 where the lowest score registered for question 8 is 4, and most of them use English on a regular basis as can be seen in table 1, questions 1 to 3. On the question about the need for English in their future careers all of the students see a need for proficiency in the English language and can connect this with what they learn in class, note that the lowest registered score for question 12 in figure 6 is 5.

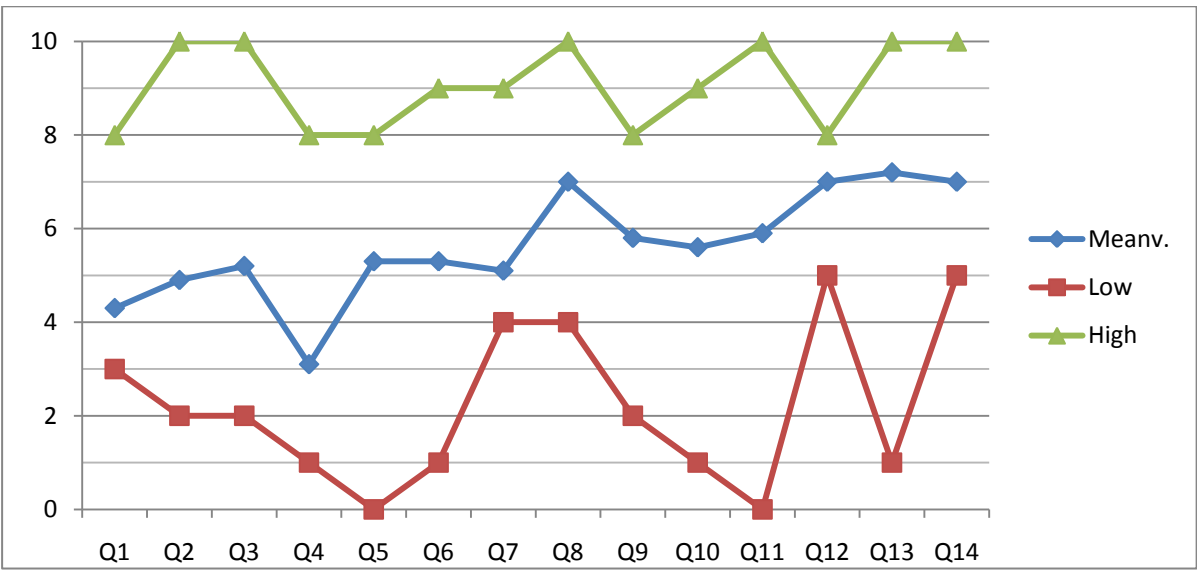


Figure 6. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Op students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.9 The Electricity Program (Ec), first year students

20 students from the electricity program participated in this study. All of them were male and all of them answered that they would need English in their future careers.

The learners in this group spend a lot of time reading and writing in English, the score for question 1 and 3 is 6.9 and 6.3. The score for question 2, how often they speak English, is 5.2 is close to the overall norm but far lower than the scores for questions 1 and 3. When the students were asked about their views about American and British culture the scores were high for both questions but they regard American culture with higher admiration,

a 6.2 score as opposed to the score for their admiration of British culture which is 5.6. As with most of the classes this group also feels more comfortable when speaking in front of the teacher than their classmates. The answer to question 9 is 6.0 and the answer to question 10 is 5.8 which in both cases matches the norm. In the case of relevance the group could connect their studies both to their personal and professional life but more so to their professional lives which can be seen in the scores for questions 11 and 12. The score for question 11 is 5.3 and the score for question 12 is 6.5 as seen in table 1. In figure 7 it can be noted that the spread of the answers to questions 13 and 14, if they felt that their grades and feedback correspond to the effort they put into the course, reached both the minimum and maximum value on the scale. The score for questions 13 and 14 landed on 5.9 and 6.0 which mean that most of students feel that their grades are fair.

When asked about how challenged they felt by the difficulty level of the course, question 7, the students’ answer was 6.0 which is higher than the norm value of 5.2 which can be seen in table 1. The answer to question 8, how interested they were in improving their English skills, is 5.8 which is lower than the norm value but still high enough to indicate a willingness to learn. When the answers to questions 7 and 8 are seen in relation to questions 1-3, how often they read, speak and write in English, the result would indicate that this class is motivated to learn and improve their English and understand the need for the language in working life.

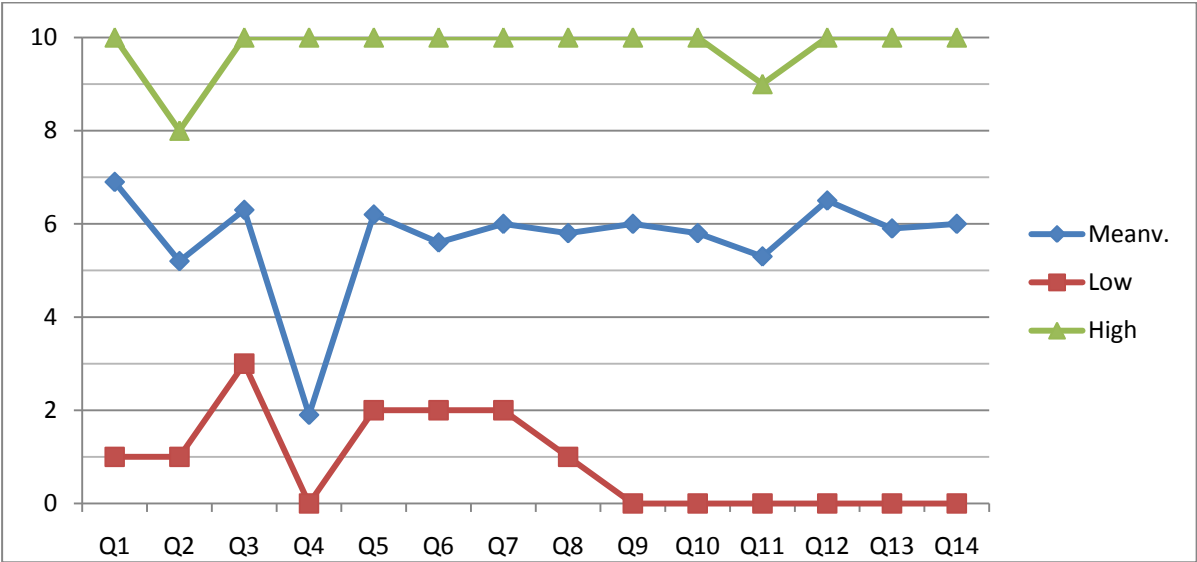


Figure 7. The lowest and highest recorded answers and the calculated mean value to each question answered by the Ec students on the questionnaire (see Appendix).

4.10 The individuals

So far the results from the survey have been presented for each class without focus on individuals. But now individual students' answers will be scrutinized and related to motivation. Although the highly motivated students differ somewhat in their answers they have some traits in common.

Most of the students that marked high scores on question 8 ("How interested are you in improving your English skills?") believed that they would need their English skills in their future careers. They also felt that the English course itself was relevant to their personal and/or future professional lives and relevance has been stated to be an important factor for motivation (Chambers 1999:37 and Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008:328).

The second biggest group of the highly motivated students was the one that seemed to respond to rewards. Even if there were some deviations within this group as well the dominant recurring features in their answers were the high points they gave to the questions 8, 13 ("Do you feel that the grades you are given for exercises correspond with the level of effort you put into doing them?") and 14 ("Do you feel that the grades you are given for exercises correspond with the level of effort you put into studying for them?") and rewards has been noted to have a positive influence on motivation by Dörnyei (Dörnyei 2001b:23).

The smallest group was the learners that gave high grades to the questions about how they felt about American and British culture (questions 5 and 6) as the only highly graded questions besides question 8. These students could fall under the category of being driven by integrative motivation as explained by Gardner (1972:12-16 and 2001:5) and Dörnyei (2001a:16).

Of the students that answered with really low scores on question 8 most of them foresaw a need for English in their postgraduate jobs but failed to connect the English they were taught with either their personal or their professional lives. Most of them thought that their grades were fair and had a balanced feeling of admiration for American and British culture since their answers to these questions mostly landed in the middle of the scale.

4.11 A comparison

Three of the classes; Hp, Nv1 and Nv2 presented really high scores on question 8, “How interested are you in improving your English skills?” note question 8 on table 1. After studying these classes’ remaining answers it was noted that the classes had two traits in common; a high percent of their students had marked yes on the question about if they expected to use English in their future careers, see Appendix, and they all had a relatively even mix of boys and girls among their students. One class broke this pattern, they marked high scores on question 8 and all of the students in the class believed that they would benefit from proficiency in English in their future careers. This class was the Health care class and what set them apart from the other three highly motivated classes was the fact that they are all female.

4.12 Summary

The students in the seven groups that answered the questionnaire are generally motivated to some degree and the students that were completely unmotivated were marginally few. By examining the answers given in the questionnaire the conclusion was drawn that the most important influence on the students’ motivation was relevance, both to their personal life and future professional lives, and that most of the highly motivated students made use of their English skills in their spare time. The importance of being able to connect and identify oneself with the culture of the target languages’ native speakers was not an overly important factor even if this was the only visible connection to a few of the strongly driven students’ high motivational levels. Grades and positive feedback as rewards were also influential in deciding if the students were motivated to learn or not but not as decisive as the factor of relevance. Question 4 (“Have you spent time in an English speaking country?”) was overlooked when dealing with the classes as a whole and only one of the highly motivated students gave a high score for that question which made its relevance for the investigation overall small but presumably it was important for this individual learner.

5. Conclusions

After going through the results a number of conclusions have formed.

Conclusion one, the students can spend little or none of their spare time using or practicing their English skills and still be highly motivated to learn. This can be seen in the relatively low answers to questions 1-3 in table 1.

Conclusion two, most of the groups had a stronger feeling of admiration for American culture than the British culture which could indicate that students would benefit motivationally from using textbooks focusing on American English.

Conclusion three, a majority of the students in each class answered that they believed that they would need to use English in their future professions and marked a high score on the question about if they felt that the tasks they were made to do in class felt relevant to their future careers. This indicates that most of the students that participated in this study have a clear motivational influence to study English.

Conclusion four, all of the classes produced a positive mean value score on question 14, "Do you feel that the grades you are given for tests correspond with the level of effort you put into studying for them?". The results suggest that as far as grades as rewards are concerned, and as such positive enhancers of motivation, all of the classes should be content. The questionnaire does not give any answers to what rewards, other than results, are utilized and how these affect the students.

6. Discussion

In this investigation there was little evidence gathered regarding the type of motivation that drove specific students. Their general attitudes, however, and if their feelings for their language studies were integrative, instrumental or intrinsic (Dörnyei 2001a:51-56) in nature, could be made out by interpreting the data gathered through the questionnaire (see Appendix).

As proven in the results section most of the students have positive feelings to the English language and understand the need for the language in their future careers. Furthermore the students are positive to their language studies as well, understanding the relevance of their English classes. They feel that their grades are fair and most of the students are of the opinion that the difficulty level of their studies are on a fair level.

Even if the type of motivation the students were driven by was difficult to identify, the presence or lack of motivation was not. The most surprising finding in the study was not that so many students were highly motivated to learn but that so few were completely uninterested in improving their skills, most of the students displayed some interest in bettering their proficiency even if this interest in many cases was tepid at best.

That most of the students had an easier time identifying with American culture rather than the British (see the results section) was also a surprising finding since the image given of the US in the media is often a negative one but this led to some ideas related to course materials. Most of the older course materials were focused mainly on British English and British culture and even if many of the new books give some attention to other English speaking cultures the main focus is still on the British one. The findings of the research done for this essay suggest that many students would benefit from material focused on American culture and English.

Motivation is the ulterior force that dictates how much effort students are willing to put into their learning, how persistent they will be when they encounter obstacles and how willing they are to take charge of their own learning. Furthermore the students can value their English studies for different reasons, an understanding and respect for the culture of English native speakers, an insight in how important English is in almost all professional fields today or they could just enjoy the lessons because of stimulating and entertaining exercises. What has actually been shown in this study is that most of the Swedish learners of English are motivated to learn and most of them see a need for their language skills in their future careers. This should be a spur for teachers and teacher students alike.

As a suggestion for further research I would recommend other students to go deeper, to actually identify specific teacher behavior that influences the students' motivation and how well equipped teachers are to handle the fact that the students have different motives for learning. Further questions about the home situation, if the parents help with the home work for example and how much time they spend reading, writing and speaking English at home, should be asked.

Sources

- Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2001a. *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2001b. *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. Harlow: Longman.
- Chambers, N. Gary. 1999. *Motivating Language Learners*. Clevedon : Multilingual Matters.
- Gardner, C. Robert. 1985. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, C. Robert. 2001. Integrative Motivation and Second Language Acquisition. In Zoltán Dörnyei and Richard Schmidt (ed), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*, 1-20. Honolulu: University of Hawaii press.
- Gardner, C. Robert and Lambert, E. Wallace. 1972. *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Newbury: Rowley Mass.
- Lightbown, M. Patsy and Spada, Nina. 2006. *How Languages are Learned*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. 2002. Rundell, Michael (ed) and Fox, Gwyneth (co-ed). London: Macmillan Education.
- Schunk, H. Dale, Pintrich, R. Paul & Meece, L. Judith. 2008. *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research and Applications*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Appendix

Det här formuläret är helt anonymt, den enda som kommer att läsa det är jag och jag kommer enbart använda det till min C-uppsats. Efter att uppsatsen är färdig och godkänd kommer jag att förstöra formulären.

Which English courses have you taken (circle the course you are taking or the courses have taken)

A B C

Do you expect to use English in your future career? YES NO

1. *Do you read English often?*

Very seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very often

2. *Do you speak English often?*

Very seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very often

3. *Do you write in English often?*

Very seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very often

4. *Have you spent time in an English speaking country?*

For a short time 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 For a long time

5. *How do you feel about American culture?*

Really dislike 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Really admire

6. *How do you feel about British culture?*

Really dislike 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Really admire

7. *Do you feel challenged by your English studies?*

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very challenged

8. *How interested are you in improving your English skills?*

Really interested 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Really interested*

9. *Do you feel comfortable with speaking English in front of your teacher?*

Very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Very comfortable*

10. *Do you feel comfortable with speaking English in front of your classmates?*

Very uncomfortable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Very comfortable*

11. *Do you feel that the tasks given in the English class are relevant for your personal life?*

Completely irrelevant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Very relevant*

12. *Do you feel that the tasks given in the English class are relevant for your future career?*

Completely irrelevant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Very relevant*

13. *Do you feel that the grades you are given for exercises correspond with the level of effort you put into doing for them?*

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Completely*

14. *Do you feel that the grades you are given for tests correspond with the level of effort you put into studying for them?*

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Completely*

Thank you for your help!