

Future English teachers' perspectives on the impact of motivation on learning a foreign language

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of motivation to the learning process and what the teacher can do to affect the motivation levels of their students. The research is done with qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews. English teacher students were interviewed on how they view the impact of motivation in language learning and what they think the teacher can do to motivate their students. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The data was analysed using an inductive thematic analysis. The analysis indicates that the participants recognised the importance of motivation in language learning. The teacher can have a positive or negative effect to the motivation levels of the students. The different aspects that can influence motivation that came up in the interviews and are discussed in this research paper are the teacher's personality and attitude, the activities during the lessons and the role of the students.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö tarkastelee motivaation vaikutusta oppimisprosessiin ja sitä, miten opettaja voi vaikuttaa oppilaidensa motivaatiotasoon. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää teemahaastattelujen muodossa. Englannin opettajaopiskelijoita haastateltiin siitä, miten he kokevat motivaation vaikuttavan kielen oppimiseen ja, miten he ajattelevat opettajan voivan parantaa oppilaiden motivaatiota. Haastattelut nauhoitettiin ja sittemmin litteroitiin. Data analysoitiin käyttämällä induktiivista temaattista analyysiä. Analyysi osoittaa, että osallistujat tunnistavat motivaation tärkeyden kielen oppimisessa. Opettajalla voi olla joko positiivinen tai negatiivinen vaikutus oppilaiden motivaatiotasoihin. Opettajan persoonallisuus ja suhtautuminen, oppituntien aktiviteetit sekä oppilaan rooli ovat eri asioita, jotka voivat vaikuttaa motivaatioon ja tulivat ilmi haastatteluissa. Nämä ovat asioita, joita tarkastellaan tässä tutkimuksessa.

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1. Introduction

Motivation can have a big impact on the learning process and outcomes, but teachers may make a difference in learners' motivation, to better or worse (Abbas, Lai-Mei, & Narjes, 2012). Abbas et al. (2012) have even called motivation the "neglected heart" when it comes to teaching (p. 15). Therefore, it is important to understand what factors affect motivation and what teachers can do to aid the language learners and keep them motivated.

The importance of keeping learners motivated is also acknowledged in the new national core curriculum for basic education of 2014. This curriculum is used on grades 1 to 9, in the Finnish education system, when children are the age of 7-16 years. The national core curriculum indicates that the working methods during the lessons that the teacher has chosen can have a positive effect in the motivation levels of the learners (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 30). As an English teacher student, my focus will be on teaching English as foreign language (EFL) and the students' motivation from the viewpoint of future English teachers. Hence, the research question for this thesis is the following: how do English language teacher students view the impact of motivation in language learning and what do they think the teacher can do to motivate their students?

The method I chose for the study is a qualitative one. I conducted semi-structured interviews with English language teacher students at the University of Oulu in order to get information on future English teachers' views on motivation and the role of the teacher in the learners' motivation. To allow the participants to focus and elaborate on what they find important, the interviews were based on some questions and themes. It was interesting to see what kind of views and ideas the participants had related to the topic. I will be doing an inductive thematic analysis on the data which is in the format of recordings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This allows me to focus on the data and the participants' views on the role of the teacher in students' motivation in English. I first got familiar with the data and then drew some themes and codes from them to discuss in this study.

To begin, I will discuss some relevant theories on motivation. These include general theories on what motivation is and what aspects are involved (Gardner, 1985), the sociocultural learning theory from the point of view of the language learner and their motivation (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier 2004), as well as the role of the teacher (Abbas et al., 2012). After having presented some of the previous research, I continue to the data and methods. In those parts I explain more in depth the reasoning behind the choices related to my data collection and analysing it. Following these, I move into the analysis, going more into detail on what the participants' answers tell about the methods that are used in motivating English learners and how motivation is perceived. I will then finish with

conclusions and discussing what kind of insight the interviews give on the practices used in classrooms and how this topic could be studied further in the future.

2. Theoretical background

In order to get a better understanding of the methods of motivating learners and reasoning behind it, it is good to understand what motivation is. Hence, I begin with a definition and introducing some aspects related to motivation. In addition, I will introduce the sociocultural theory about language learning from the point of view of the learner. There are different methods related to the tasks and the atmosphere in a classroom that affect the students' levels of motivation some of which I go through (Abbas et al., 2012). The role of the teacher is important, and they can have a positive or negative impact on the learner's motivation through different ways, such as the choices of exercises and communication tactics. This is the theoretical background I cover in the following sections.

2.1 The concept of motivation

Gardner (1985, p. 10) defines motivation in the field of language learning as the amount of work and will a learner has towards learning a language as well as a positive attitude about the process. According to him, there are four aspects involved in motivation: "a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes toward the activity in question" (p. 50). There are individual differences in these aspects which is why there is not only one way to motivate a learner. Learners might have different goals in learning a language.

As Gardner and Lambert (1972) explain, one may have integrative motivation, one instrumental motivation, or one might have a mix of these. Integrative motivation refers to when the learner wants to learn a language for personal reasons, and for instance just for the joy of learning a new language and learning about new cultures; and instrumental motivation refers to when the motivation for language learning comes from someone else and, for example, its usefulness (p. 132). An English language learner could for example enjoy learning the language because they have visited an Anglophone country and have enjoyed the culture. This would be integrative motivation. An example of instrumental motivation would be if a learner enjoys learning English because watching English films or their parents say it is useful in the future. As in the last example, the learner's, the teacher's or the parent's attitudes towards the language might have a positive or negative effect on how much effort or will the learner has for learning a language (Gardner, 1985, p. 40).

2.2 The learner's motivation

Something closely related to motivation and learning a language in general is Leontiev's (1978) activity theory (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). This theory interprets activity as action that has been induced "either by a biological need, such as hunger, or a culturally constructed need, such as the need to be literate in certain cultures" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). The theory considers that an activity includes three levels: "the level of motivation, the level of action, and the level of conditions" (p. 8). This can help understand the learning process in a language classroom looking at the learning process as the activity. Hence, the level of motivation a learner has affects the level of action, for example participation during lessons, which again affects the results, for example to what extent the learner has learned the topics covered.

In Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) there is the aspect of an expert helping the novice for example in learning a language (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). However, the interaction between an expert and a novice is not the only way to understand the ZPD. The main idea of the theory is that a learner has already some skills or knowledge about a topic and then is introduced to something that is new but not too far away from their current skills or knowledge (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). Lantolf (2000) mentions that it is important that the teacher has "a sensitivity to students' current abilities and their potential development" (p. 25). If an English teacher is aware of their students' level and has planned the lessons according to them so that they are in their students' ZPD, the students may feel more motivated to learn and to participate during the lessons.

Another aspect that can be linked to the activity theory and the ZPD is the learner's self. Van Lier (2004) explains it as one's "experiences in life, particularly social and cultural ones [...] [that] shape who we are to ourselves and to the others with whom we interact" (p. 93). These life experiences may include for example different relationships and cultural aspects, and the self may "be seen as a reciprocal relationship between the individual and his/her world" (van Lier, 2004, p. 93). The self in that sense can affect the language learning process and whether the learner feels motivated and to what extent.

2.3 Different methods used to motivate

As it is mentioned in the core curriculum, it is important that the activities used in classrooms show the joy of learning and working together as they increase motivation (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 23). It also suggests that tasks requiring self-direction and tasks that make the learner feel they belong in the group, have a similar effect (p. 30). Therefore, according to these

points, exercises that are related to an interesting topic and require group work could enhance motivation. In an English language classroom, these kinds of tasks could be realised as the topics covered during the lessons are diverse.

The type of the activities plays a role also according to Mukesh and Hussam (2013, p. 121). They did questionnaires and interviewed Saudi bachelor's degree students with English as a major to find out their views on demotivating factors in their experience (p. 122). For example, the lack of using technology was one demotivating factor (p. 127). Technology could be incorporated in the teaching by using laptops or tablet PCs and material from the Internet, such as video clips, for instance. Also, the topics and the exercises should be meaningful and useful in the real life; or as Mukesh and Hussam (2013) has put it: the teacher should extend their "reach and broadens students experience beyond the classroom" (p. 127). English teaching should not only focus on vocabulary and grammar but should be customised to the needs and goals of the students (p. 128).

2.4 The role of the teacher

As there are methods to motivate language learners, there must be something the teacher can do. Abbas et al. (1985) explain ways in which the teacher can have an impact in the learner's motivation. Many of them have to do with the way the teacher interacts with their students, such as encouraging students and acknowledging them and their needs (p. 13). There are also some aspects that need to be covered before the teacher can help students with motivation. These include having a safe atmosphere, being cooperative and having good relations between the teacher and the students (p. 13). These are some of the starting points for a language teacher to keep the students motivated.

Providing support and possibilities for growth and autonomy are also ways a teacher can help students stay motivated (Murray et al., 2011, p. 132). These are something a teacher might consider as fundamental in teaching, and they are also core aspects in the national core curriculum for basic education 2014. The importance of support increases when the working methods in a classroom reinforce the students towards self-direction. Murray et al. (2011) have results which show that teachers and students think these skills that are learnt in classroom are useful in the future as well (p. 132; p. 134). Doing something meaningful again keeps the learners motivated.

Another aspect related to the working methods and tasks during language lessons is getting the students involved in the planning and getting an understanding of the individual learners and their skills and needs (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, pp. 30–31). In other words, having a

feeling of meaningfulness, getting their voice heard and their needs met increase motivation. As in English language lessons there may be learners of different backgrounds and levels, these aspects are important to keep in mind when planning the lessons.

There are also ways the teacher may be a factor in demotivation (Mukesh & Hussam, 2013). These are closely related to the ones motivating students but with negative aspects, and often the case is something is not done. The working methods, the relations between the teacher and the students or the teacher's attitudes can have a negative effect (p. 121). Similarly, not treating the students as equals is found to be demotivating (p. 121). Hence, the teacher may be a positive or negative factor in students' motivation in language learning.

3. Data and methods

In the following sections I will explain my research approach and sampling method, and why I have done the decisions I have. As I used interviews, I will elaborate on the process of conducting them and introduce the questions I designed for them. I will also give some information about the participants and discuss the ethical aspects.

3.1 Research approach and sampling method

The approach in this study is a qualitative one. The data I have collected is in the form of interviews and the interviewees are three English teacher students from the University of Oulu. All three participants were in different points in their studies: one of them has already finished her pedagogical studies and training, the second one is currently doing her pedagogical studies and training, and the last one has not started his pedagogical studies or training yet. I will refer to the first participant as Nina, the second one as Sara and the third one as Jack to protect their identities and make it easier to refer to the participants and quote them. All the English teacher students do their pedagogical training at the Oulu University Teacher Training School (Normaalikoulu) when they start their pedagogical studies.

The participants were chosen through opportunity sampling as it is the most suitable for this size of a study and as an English teacher student, I could contact directly peer students. This also allows to have focus on the quality of the interviews and their analysis, rather than having many shorter interviews and spending less time to analyse them. Even though this sampling method seems most suitable for this paper, it has some disadvantages. The sample might not be representative of all the English teacher students, for example due to the small number of participants and individual differences. There could be some teacher students who have differing opinions to the ones that the participants have. Therefore, it is good to keep in mind that the results give some ideas on future teachers' thoughts on motivation and on the methods used to keep students motivated.

To get the most out of the data, I use an inductive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 83). When I started analysing, I made some transcriptions of each interview. Then I started to look for the codes and writing down the different views and ideas the participants have. To finish I came up with themes that represent the main points in the data. Throughout the process I listened to the interview recordings several times to get familiar with the data.

3.2 Ethical aspects

Before the interviews, the participants each were given an informed consent which they signed, indicating they were willing to take part, give permission for the use of the data and know they have a possibility to withdraw at any point. Other ethical aspects related to the data that are taken into consideration are destroying the data when the thesis is ready, reporting the results truthfully as well as quoting appropriately. In addition, no real names are used, and all the data is anonymous.

3.3 Interviews

The reason I use semi-structured interviews is to allow the participant to elaborate on what they find important and to give a possibility to lead the discussion in a direction they want, for example if there are specific topics the student finds are not much discussed. The questions are open-ended in order to get a better view of the participant's view on the topic and to avoid bias. To keep the situation as relaxed and easy for the participants, the interviews were conducted in their mother tongue, Finnish. I will provide the original response in Finnish in addition to an English translation when citing and giving examples from the interviews. The questions are the following:

1. How do you think teachers can affect the students' levels of motivation? And what do you think are the difficulties in motivating?
2. What do you think you can do as a language teacher to enhance the language learning process?
3. What factors do you think affect students' motivation?
4. What kinds of methods have you used/could you use for keeping students motivated?

Even though I designed questions, I went to the interviews with an open mind. I did not necessarily follow the order of the questions but used them to help keep up the conversation and rather asked further questions to get more information on the interesting topics the participants introduced. The interviews were all 15-30 minutes long.

4. Analysis

The participants who had started or finished their teacher training explained that the topic of motivation is not much talked about in the current English teacher education. However, it is covered via topics such as what kind of teaching is functional, how to go through topics in a logical manner and what students like. In the following sections I will introduce the themes that were brought up in the data and analyse them. With the help of examples from the interviews, I will discuss the participants' views on the role of motivation in learning English and the role of the teacher. I have divided the analysis under three categories: the teacher's personality and attitude, the activities during the lessons, and the role of the students.

4.1 Teacher's personality and attitude

The role of the teacher's personality and attitude towards the topic of the lesson and the students was brought up by each one of the participants. The participants describe how the way of speaking, the attitudes, the personality traits and the way the teacher behaves in front of the class affects the learners and their motivation. They explain that if the teacher is excited about the topic, the students enjoy more listening to them than in the case if the teacher seems like they would not be interested in it at all. This is something many of us might have experienced ourselves at some point in our school career with some teacher and subject. Nina gives an example of a situation where someone has a great biology teacher and the student learns to like the subject through that and says it would be lovely to be that kind of an inspiring teacher.

Nina mentions that an encouraging and inspiring teacher can motivate students better. Encouragement and being approving are also mentioned to have a positive effect in Abbas et al. (1985, p.13) study. This has an important role in creating a good, safe atmosphere, which can be crucial in an English classroom as it can be intimidating to speak up and participate if one is feeling already uncomfortable or shy. Especially Sara discussed the effects of the teacher's reaction and attitude towards the students and in the case when a student answers incorrectly. One aspect that she emphasises is being encouraging when reacting to the students' responses: "...vaikka ne vastaisi väärin niin silti tuet niitä ja sanot, että 'joo tuo oli ihan hyvä, melkein oikein' niin se tukee sitä niin kuin, että 'aa, osasin minä jotakin'" (transl. "...even though they would answer incorrectly you support them and say that 'yeah that was okay, almost correct' so the students feel like 'oh, I knew something'"). This encourages the more timid students to participate and raise their hand. Something else regarding providing support that Sara mentions is about going through the exercises: some students were frustrated as they were almost never finished with the exercises

before that, but the teacher can emphasise that it is completely fine if they are not done. Also, if the teacher has been helping a student with the exercises, they can let the student answer if they are raising their hand to encourage them and give them a positive experience. These ways the teacher can support the students and be encouraging which, as mentioned by Abbas et al. (1985, p. 13), are important in keeping students motivated.

Sara explains that a relaxed but still strict teacher can create an easy-going situation for everyone, and the students will not feel like someone constantly assessing them, which reduces the stress of participating and increases motivation. She describes that the way the teacher behaves and feels in front of the class has a big effect on the motivation of the students. If the students see that the teacher is clearly uncomfortable being in front of the class, the students will react to it and feel uncomfortable. However, Sara explains that if students can see that the teacher enjoys speaking about the topic, it will have a positive effect. The relationship between the teacher and the students and how they communicate are therefore in a big role.

Also, Jack indicates the way the teacher speaks affects the students' motivation. He explains that if a teacher is energetic and enthusiastic and seems like they "ettei malttaisi lopettaa jostain asiasta puhumista" (transl. "could not help but to speak about some topic") they are more likely to get one's attention and keep them motivated to listen and come to the lesson. As he explains, the students can see whether the teacher is also themselves interested in the topic. Something else closely related to the teacher's enthusiasm that Jack mentions is the vocabulary and level of knowledge the teacher has. It can have an impact on the motivation of students. Students might find it demotivating if the teacher cannot answer the questions which is why a large general vocabulary is important. Another more specific aspect of knowledge Jack introduces is linguistics: the teacher should have a wider understanding on the language and how it works. This again will help in answering questions. However, it is good to remember that teachers' main task is not to remember everything by heart and that the most important is to aid the students' learning process. Looking at the activity theory (Lantolf, 2000), aiding the teaching process has a more significant role as it can enhance the level of conditions, which can therefore enhance the learning process (p.8).

As the participants each mention, the students can see whether or not a teacher is motivated about what they are doing, and it is more motivating to listen to someone who is motivated themselves. Sara gives the example of a situation from her pedagogical training where she had planned an activity for a lesson that required acting. She used her strengths and interests for it and threw herself into it when showing the examples and indicated that "jos minä olen tämän kanssa fine ja minä olen tällä lailla, että 'leikkikää, olkaa rennosti' niin sitten nekin on" (transl. "if I am fine with this and if I

am like ‘play around, be relaxed’ they will do that”). This helped the students be more comfortable and not as scared to participate as Sara initially thought. Hence, it is important how the teacher behaves and that they remember to use their strengths. Once more, being encouraging and supporting, and creating a safe atmosphere has an important role in the students’ motivation and how much they are willing to participate (Abbas et al., 1985, p. 13; Murray et al., 2011, p. 132).

Another interesting aspect that Sara mentions that was talked about in the pedagogical studies is what the teacher focuses on in different situations. She gives the example of a situation where you are going through some word order exercises and whether the teacher should correct the students’ pronunciation or just focus on whether the words are in a grammatically correct order. She elaborates that pronunciation is often a very sensitive topic which is why the teacher should be considerate especially if someone is raising their hand and participating for the first time. The teacher’s attitude towards the learners and their learning affects as well, which is also brought up by Abbas et al. (1985, p. 13). Sara explains that during the pedagogical studies they speak about how the teacher reacts if the student answers incorrectly. Another aspect that is discussed during the studies is encouraging the students to use the language, in this case English, even though their grammar may not be perfect. By using the language elsewhere than only in the classroom, it becomes something meaningful to learn and hence, enhances the level of motivation (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, pp. 30–31).

Sara summarises well one example of why it is important how the teacher reacts to the students and what kind of an attitude they have towards them:

(1)

Kyllä minä ajattelisin, että sillä opettajalla on tosi iso vaikutus tuohon motivaatioon, että se, että miten opettaja suhtautuu siihen oppilaaseen ja siihen sen oppimiseen. Monellakin oppilaalla, joka on huonompi voi tulla semmoinen fiilis, että ’tuo opettaja varmaan ajattelee, että minä olen ihan tyhmä’. Ja sitten just se, että tulisi niille oppilaille semmoinen fiilis, että ’ei se opettaja ajattele, että sinä olet ihan tyhmä, että se ajattelee, että sinä opit ja, että sä kehityt ja sillä lailla se tsemppaa, vaikka se olisi ihan pientä se kehitys, mutta sitä on’. Niin minun mielestäni se on sillä lailla tosi tärkeä asia.

Translation

I would think that the teacher has a very big impact on motivation by how they approach the students and their learning. For example, many students who are weaker [in English] might have a feeling that ‘the teacher probably thinks I am completely stupid’. And then you try to get a feeling for the student that ‘no, the teacher does not think you are completely stupid, but that you will learn and make progress, and they will support you even though the progress might be very small’. But that is why I think it is an important thing.

Example 1 conveys that the way the teacher behaves can have a great impact on how the students feel and thus, affects their motivation. It is important that the teacher understands how language is learnt and how motivation is linked in that process, such as in Leontiev's (1978) activity theory through the levels of motivation, action and conditions (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). Understanding how the different aspects such as the learner's self (van Lier, 2004) and the ZPD (Lantolf, 2000) affect their motivation and interest level in learning English, or the subject in general, is useful for the teacher. This will help the teacher teach their students to their best ability. The importance of support and creating possibilities for growth and autonomy cannot be forgotten in the kinds of situations as example 1 describes where a student feels discouraged and unmotivated (Murray et al., 2011, p. 132).

4.2 Activities during the lessons

Another theme that I found from the data is the topics and activities. They have an impact on the students' motivation levels as well as the teacher's personality and attitude. Nina tells that politics and hobbies are topics that the students were interested in at the teacher training school. However, it might be difficult to find a topic that each student in the classroom is interested in. Nina mentions one way to find out students' interests or needs: collecting wishes before the course and make the students fill in a questionnaire with open-ended questions about their skills and their expectations on the course. She explains they used this kind of a questionnaire in the beginning of the course and at the end of it they gave them back to the students and they could reflect on their learning on the other side of the paper. The aim of doing this was to make students realise they have learned something and make them feel motivated. Reflection and being able to affect the lessons are some ways to help keep students motivated during the lessons (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, pp. 30–31).

Collecting students' wishes before the course is one way of getting the students involved and the importance of involvement is noted in the national curriculum of 2014 as well (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, pp. 30–31). It is also one way to get an understanding of the English levels of each individual which again would help keeping the students motivated if the topics are not covered too quickly, going too far from their ZPD (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). Another aspect that helps the teacher is understanding the self of the learner and how past experiences affect their attitude and motivation towards English, for example (van Lier, 2004, p. 93). Hence, it is important that the teacher acknowledges the individual differences even though they might be challenging for the teacher, as the participants mentioned. Nina and Jack both discuss the challenges of the

differences between the learners and express some concern as to how an English teacher can appeal to and satisfy the whole group with the same teaching as it can be noted from the example 2 where Jack talks about the learners' individual differences:

(2)

[m]utta se on sinänsä harmi, kun on niitä [oppilaita], jotka osaavat huonommin ja tarvitsisivat enemmän perusasioiden kertausta ja sitten on niitä, jotka osaavat jo kaiken sen, niin ne tarvitsisivat taas sitten stimuloivaa, motivoivaa opetusta, mikä on sitten taas liian vaikeata, sanotaanko sille lopulle ryhmää. En tiedä pystytkö siihen yksinään vaikuttamaan opettajana, mutta se olisi hyvä, jos pystyisi tarjoamaan edistyneemmille ja niille, jotka ei ole niin edistyneitä oman tasoista, niiden tarpeita palvelevaa ratkaisua.

Translation

[b]ut it is a shame as there are those [students] who are not that good at English and would need more of repetition of the basics, and then there are those who already know all of those things and would need stimulating, motivating teaching, which is again too hard for the rest of the group, let's say. I do not know whether you can affect it alone as a teacher, but it would be good to be able to offer for the more advanced learners and for those who are not as advanced a solution that is suitable for their level, for their needs.

Example 2 indicates the acknowledgment of the individual differences between the learners as well as the importance of understanding what can be motivating for these learners. Hence, understanding the ZPD and the effects of the learner's self to motivation is important for the teacher to find teaching methods and activities that can be motivating to different individuals (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17; van Lier, 2004, p. 93).

Another way for the teacher to have an impact in the students' motivation is through the working methods used during the lessons. Different types of games are an easy way to keep students motivated and interested as they get a result straight away and do not have to wait for results as in the case of small tests for example. Discussion exercises related to opinions are also a good option and the students get to learn English without having to come up with artificial things to speak. Another aspect in the activities that require discussing with someone is that students are working together. Working in a group can make students feel like they belong in a group, which has a positive effect in their motivation (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 23).

It is important to link what is learnt in the classroom to the everyday life and keep it practical, especially when doing through grammar and theory. As Mukesh and Hussam (2013, p. 127) note, the usefulness and meaningfulness of what is learnt can make a difference in the motivation level of the learners. What one learner might find meaningful and useful, in the case mentioned in example

2 “repetition of the basics”, might not be that for another learner, and this is reflected in their motivation levels. In the case of grammar, a topic that Nina finds a challenging one to find interesting ways to teach and make interesting, this could be realised by using real life examples and not keeping it too theoretical. For example, some video material, podcasts or interviews could be used to observe some grammatical structures. However, it much depends on how much effort and time the teacher is ready to invest in the planning. Nina explains that some fellow students had prepared materials themselves but that there is much ready-made material and programs to make exercises available on the Internet. Of course, the learners’ interests have a role as well and they might be challenging to meet if each learner has very different interests and motivations (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier, 2004).

The working methods and activities that Sara reckons are motivating include the same aspects as the ones mentioned by the other participants. She mentions using phones for searching for information, for example, and Kahoots, a quiz that is easy to make on the Internet. Nina and Sara say that especially the Kahoots have been a success and the students get very excited, and they are easy for the teacher to prepare and take only 5 to 10 minutes of the lesson. This supports what Mukesh and Hussam (2013) explain about the use of technology as a motivating factor (p. 127). In addition, based on how Sara explained how excited the students get about the Kahoots, they spark a joy in them, which is mentioned as a motivating factor in the core curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 23). What comes to the competitive situation, it can help the students to find a goal, something they want to achieve. These are some of the four aspects that Gardner (1985) links with motivation: “a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes toward the activity in question” (p. 50). Having some games or quizzes to bring some variation to the English lessons can help the students to find again their motivation even if they might have not been feeling motivated in the beginning. The competitiveness of the task can result as a goal of winning and therefore, in effortful action, which again leads to the student wanting to get to the goal and liking the task.

Another example Sara gives about what a teacher can do to keep students motivated is keeping breaks whilst doing a big pile of exercises from hand-outs. She explains that in her pedagogical training they had a small pronunciation task in between doing the exercises that does not require much effort from the students. The reasoning that she gives for having a small, easy task to have a break from the hand-outs is that when the task is easy enough, they will do it gladly. In this pronunciation task, for example, this was realised so that they did not have to try and come up with sentences but had them ready for them and just had to read them aloud. This also shows the

understanding that motivation affects the learning process: if the students do not feel motivated, they are not interested or willing to do exercises. Another aspect regarding exercises and tasks is that they should be simple and have clear instructions. She also adds that the lessons do not always have to be ”semmoinen pöhinätunti, [...], että voi olla välillä ihan sitä ‘perinteistäkin’” (transl. “new and innovative, they can be more of the ‘traditional’ type as well”) even though the teacher students are encouraged to try new ideas during their training. Jack also mentions that it is important to have some more ‘traditional’ teaching, such as word tests and using textbooks. From this it could be concluded that variation is a good idea in this respect.

Another aspect during the lessons that Jack highlights is the importance of having time for explaining so that the teacher is not stuck on the board and does not only go through what is written on it just for the sake of going through the topics. Jack also mentions the aspect of being familiar with the technological devices in the classroom. This way the teacher has all the time during the lesson to focus on the teaching rather than ”ei tarvitsisi tuhlata aikaa mihinkään tekniikan kanssa tappeluun, koska sekin on varmasti niistä oppilaistakin semmoinen asia, mikä turhauttaa niitä, jotka haluaisivat jotain oppia” (transl. “having to waste time to battle with the technology as it surely is something that frustrates the students who would like to learn something”). Having time for questions and discussion provides a possibility for growth which again enhances students’ motivation (Murray et al., 2011, p. 132). These aspects are also closely related to the preparations before the lessons as to whether the teacher is familiar with the equipment and has set aside enough time for questions and discussion.

Another point connected to supporting and giving possibilities for growth and autonomy (Murray et al., 2011) is the way the instructions are given. Sara explains that between the groups of the seventh graders and the high schoolers there is quite a difference. The seventh graders need more precise instructions, for example telling what they begin with and what they do next. With the high schoolers the teacher does not have to say the instructions step by step in the same way as with the younger students and can allow more freedom, which then allows the growth and autonomy. By giving tasks that are appropriate for the level of the students and require a good amount of self-direction, and by providing support, the students will profit and be more motivated (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 30; Murray et al., 2011, p. 132).

4.3 The role of the students

Not only does Nina bring up the attitude of the teacher but also the attitude of the students and the atmosphere in the classroom in general. She tells that in some cases “jostain syystä lyödään läskiksi siellä tunnilla, että sitten ei välttämättä kukaan halua erityisesti nousta esiin” (transl. “for some reason, the students mess around and no one really wants to stand out”). Another aspect she mentions is that it might be challenging to try to motivate a student who has an attitude that nothing is interesting or who thinks “minä olen ihan surkea englannissa enkä minä tule tässä ikinä pärjäämään” (transl. “I am really bad at English and I will never do well”). These kinds of students might have difficulties to find motivation themselves, or the teacher might have difficulties in finding a way to motivate them as some might be only on the mandatory English courses or only want to do well because of outer motivators, such as parents. In addition, bad grades or failures are one factor that can be demotivating. Nina gives the example that a student could “ei teekään mieli yrittää, jos tuntuu, ettei siitä ikinä tule mitään tuloksia” (transl. “not want to try if they feel like they will not get any results out of it”). Another example she gives of attitudes students might have towards grammar for instance is having the idea stuck in their head that “tämä on tosi vaikeata, enkä minä opi tätä” (transl. “this is really hard, I am not going to learn this”). In these types of cases with students having trouble with being motivated the students might find the amount of self-direction and autonomy too much or they might have lost interest because they would need tasks that require more self-direction and autonomy.

These examples from the interview also convey awareness of the effect of past experiences in English lessons or elsewhere that can affect the learner’s motivation which could also be part of the reason in lack of motivation. As in the ZPD theory, this depends much on the student’s abilities and past experiences what keeps them motivated (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier, 2004). This is important to keep in mind in addition to having a good attitude towards the students and considering the individual differences between the students as the examples 1 and 2 imply, as it can help the teacher to do those better. Hence, understanding the goal and the motivation for taking an English course, whether it is to learn English to move abroad or they have taken the course because it is mandatory, is important (Gardner, 1985, p. 50).

The participants acknowledge that as there are individual differences in the students’ motivation levels and what their motivation for learning English is. This may then result as students having different ZPDs or they might even have a different type of motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132; Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). Someone might have some family living in an Anglophonic country and thus have integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132), and someone else might

be just motivated to pass the course like Nina mentioned in the interview. This may result in that someone might put different level of action into learning English (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). These individual differences can show up as the discouraged attitudes and the unwillingness to participate that Nina brought up in the interview discussing the point of view of motivating those who are not that interested in English.

Jack also discusses the effect of students' age to the motivation. He explains that at some point in secondary school there is a stage where it is even almost pointless to try to motivate the students if they are not interested; ”mutta sen verran pitäisi tietenkin kiinnostaa, että pääsisi niistä kursseista läpi” (transl. “however, they should be interested to that extent that they pass the courses”). In a big group it might be challenging to try and motivate individual students as the time for the lesson or lecture is limited to 45-90 minutes. The individual differences in the skills and the level of English can be challenging and require a different approach from the teacher than a class that would have been divided according to the students' English levels. Hence, Jack explains that it would be good to have the English group divided depending on the levels of the students' English as the differences might be substantial. Even though this could help with differentiating, but as all the participants expressed their concern on how to keep students motivated enough to pass the course and not find the lessons horrible, it might not be the answer to those obstacles.

Correspondingly, Nina discusses the challenge of having learners with different levels of English in the same classroom. She wonders “miten sinä voit samalla opetuksella vedota sekä niihin, jotka ovat aivan tosi taitavia ja sitten niihin, jotka tarvitsisivat oikeasti sitä tukea koko ajan?” (transl. “how can you, with the same teaching, appeal to those who are very talented and to those who would really need support all the time?”). Now that all the students with different levels of English are put in one group, the teacher needs to have additional exercises for those who are better in English so that they do not start chatting and disturbing others. Sara also mentions that not everyone is interested in English and wonders “miten saat ne kuitenkin motivoitumaan sen verran, että ne oppisivat jotakin ja, että niillä olisi suhteellisen kivaa siellä tunnilla?” (transl. “how to get them motivated so that they would learn something, and they would have at least a little fun on the lesson?”). She thinks easy and play-like activities and exercises could be helpful in this case. Not only does this reflection indicate that the participants are aware of that there are other factors affecting the students' level of motivation than the teacher, it also indicates motivating students is a complex topic and the teacher's attitude and understanding towards the topic can also have an impact. For example, if an English teacher does not acknowledge the many aspects of motivation

and the role the teacher and the students themselves have on it, it can have negative effects (Mukesh & Hussam, 2013, p. 121).

5. Conclusion

The future English language teachers that participated in this study each had their own perspectives and opinions about the impact of motivation in language learning and how they viewed the role of the teacher in it. This may be partly since they were each in different situations in their studies, but perhaps also due to individual differences and experiences. However, they had similar thoughts on that the teacher can have an impact on the motivation levels of the students and that this impact is significant and can be positive or negative. They recognised that even though the teacher has a role in students' motivation, there are other variables as well, and those might not always be in the control of the teacher. In addition, the findings show that the participants perceive motivation as an important part of the learning process, which it also enhances.

The way the teacher behaves in front of the classroom and communicates with their students as well as their attitude affects students' motivation and the whole learning process, as the previous analysis and the studies suggest (Abbas et al., 1985; Finnish National Board of Education, 2016; Murray et al., 2011). As learning a language is very personal and sometimes can be intimidating, the importance of the teacher and their encouragement, and understanding of the different aspects, such as the influence of past experiences and individual differences in motivation, learning processes and even life in general, is also crucial as the analysis and studies show (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier, 2004). This allows the teacher to help the students' in the best possible way to learn and stay motivated.

The difficulties in differentiation and making grammar interesting were also brought up several times and show that the choices in activities play a role as well. The findings showed that being aware of the individual differences and needs, and having meaningful, interesting activities that spark joy are something to keep in mind as planning the lessons as they help enhancing motivation levels (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016; Mukesh & Hussam, 2013). However, the participants talked about how the individual differences in motivation play a role as well as how students might have different kinds of motivations for the English courses (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The participants who had done or were currently doing their pedagogical studies thought that motivating students could be more covered in the teachers' education by, for example, having visitors speaking on the topic. It was also brought up that more guidance related to motivation would be desired as it is a topic that is not much covered in the teacher training; there are some practical issues that the future English teachers will face at work that they might not have considered before the pedagogical training. This desire is understandable as motivation is a complex

topic. Hence, it is an important topic to research. This study gives some insight on how future English teachers view the impact of motivation in language learning and what they think they can do as a language teacher to motivate their students. Further research could be therefore done on the perspectives of English teachers who have been teaching for some years already to get an even better understanding how this shows in practice.

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