

# Motivational Aspects in Teaching English Culture and Literature: A Narrative Analysis

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**Abstract:** *This article deals with motivational aspects in teaching English culture and literature to pupils aged 14-16. Teaching and learning languages in the modern world is not only giving knowledge about different linguistic aspects and practising exercises in course books, but also teaching with a more global perspective. Authentic material is all around us and the teacher's role is to make correct choices in order to raise motivation and interest in teaching and learning about new cultures. Classrooms observations and students' narratives are used to deepen the understanding of the role that motivation plays in the learning process. The results of the research confirm the positive effects of constructivist learning methods in order to raise the intrinsic motivation.*

**Keywords:** *constructivist learning theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.*

**Résumé :** *L'objectif de cet article est d'étudier les aspects de la motivation dans l'enseignement de la culture et de la littérature anglaise aux élèves âgés de 14-16 ans. L'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues dans le monde moderne apportent non seulement des connaissances sur les différents aspects linguistiques, mais le traitent également par le biais d'une approche plus globale. À travers le matériel authentique qui nous entoure de plus en plus, c'est le professeur qui est responsable des bons choix afin d'augmenter la motivation et l'intérêt de ses élèves envers les nouvelles cultures. Des observations, une interview et la comparaison des notes scolaires ont été menées pour approfondir la compréhension du rôle que la motivation joue dans le processus d'apprentissage. Les résultats de cette recherche confirment l'effet positif des méthodes constructivistes afin de renforcer la motivation intrinsèque.*

**Mots-clés :** *Apprentissage constructiviste, motivation intrinsèque et extrinsèque.*

## I. Background and Aims of the Study

During my seven years of language teaching experience, I have seen students with high intrinsic motivation which has helped them achieve higher results in learning languages. However, I also have seen students with no interest toward

languages, especially the cultural aspects, which has led to poor results. This fact has made the constructivist learning approach very difficult to practice in my classes. Thus, many questions have emerged:

- What can I do to help intrinsically low-motivated students to increase their interest towards the English language and culture?
- How can I make my lessons more attractive and appealing to those students whose results reflect their poor skills in English?
- How can I help to raise student's interest towards literature, especially in a foreign language? Students who do not read in their spare time are usually much more ignorant in dealing with cultural issues.

In order to find answers to the above-mentioned questions I have created two special courses to attract pupils' interest towards the cultural issues. Besides, I conducted a survey which results are presented in the chapter of discussion.

The aim of the present study was to gather information about how effective and motivationally challenging are the courses to pupils that have been designed according to constructivist learning theory.

## II. Theoretical Overview

The following chapters reflect on the theoretical framework of the study conducted at Püünsi Basic School in Estonia.

### II.1 The constructivist learning theory

The constructivist learning theory is based on a learner's active participation in integrating new information into their previous knowledge (Bruner 1990). The teacher's role in leading students through their studies is extremely important. The learners need to develop new understandings using what they already know and then be able to associate and represent it in a meaningful way so the learning process itself becomes active rather than passive. The constructivists claim it is impractical for teachers to make all the on-going decisions and not involve the students in the process. Instead, guided instruction is suggested to put students at the centre of the learning process, and provide them with necessary information. However, Perkins (1991) indicates that students may easily get lost in management without any experience to guide them through the information. Therefore the teacher's role in conducting the students through their studies is extremely important. Jonassen (1990) proposed eight characteristics that differentiate constructivist learning environments and those characteristics have been supported by both social and cognitive constructivists:

1. *Constructivist learning environments provide multiple representations of reality.*
2. *Multiple representations avoid oversimplification and represent the complexity of the real world.*
3. *Constructivist learning environments emphasize knowledge construction inserted instead of knowledge reproduction.*
4. *Constructivist learning environments emphasize authentic tasks in a meaningful context rather than abstract instruction out of context.*

5. *Constructivist learning environments provide learning environments such as real-world settings or case-based learning instead of predetermined sequences of instruction.*
6. *Constructivist learning environments encourage thoughtful reflection on experience.*
7. *Constructivist learning environments enable context- and content- dependent knowledge construction."*
8. *Constructivist learning environments support "collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation, not competition among learners for recognition."*

As learning is a social activity, the process itself associates the learners with other people - teachers, peers, family. Dewey (1919 in Von Glasersfeld 1995) has pointed out that most of traditional learning is directed toward isolating the learner from social interaction, and towards seeing education as a one-on-one relationship between the learner and the objective material being learned. Therefore constructivists emphasize that learning should be contextual. We learn in relationship to what else we know, believe and feel. It is impossible to learn without having some structure developed from previous knowledge to build on. The key component to learning is motivation.

## II.2 Motivation

The term "motivation" comes from the Latin word *movere* which means "to move". The idea of movement is reflected in different commonsense ideas about motivation as something that keeps us working, gets us going and helps us complete tasks. Motivation is a process rather than a product. Therefore we cannot observe it directly but we can infer it from actions and verbalisations. Motivation involves goals that provide impetus for and direction to action (Schunk et al 2002). Goals may not be exactly clear and may alter with experience. Still, it is of utmost importance that persons are conscious of something they endeavour or avoid. Motivation requires that people understand the relation between their behaviour and desired outcome (Deci & Flaste 1995). Motivation may be physical, meaning effort and persistence; and mental, meaning cognitive actions, such as planning, monitoring, organising, assessing situations and making decisions. These are important elements in a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. There are many definitions of motivation and abundant disagreement over its precise nature. One of the contemporary perspectives assumes that motivation is a complex phenomenon that depends on a host of personal, social and contextual variables and changes with human development. It also reflects individual, group, and cultural differences in beliefs, values and goal set-ups (Dweck 2000).

## II.3 Intrinsic Motivation

This chapter attempts to explain the importance of intrinsic motivation. The general understanding is that the most effective motivation comes from outside the person. The profound research done by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci shows however, that self-motivation (meaning intrinsic motivation) is the focal point of long-lasting creativity, responsibility and healthy behaviour. "The concept of intrinsic motivation, which refers to the process of doing an activity for its own sake, is for the reward that is inherent in the activity itself." (Deci &

Flaste 1995:21). Preschool children learn because they want to and not necessarily because they want to achieve something else. Obviously something changes inside the child as the intrinsic motivation seems to recede when they grow older. Once having been rewarded, the student will very often continue to be in it for the reward and not for the inner motivating factors. Extrinsic motivators pressure students with deadlines, surveillance, imposed goals, evaluations - but they all undermine intrinsic motivation (Lepper & Greene 1975).

Several experiments have indicated that when people were asked to do a certain task but were allowed the freedom of having some say in how to do it, they were more fully engaged by the activity and enjoyed it more than people who were not treated as unique individuals. Providing choice is one of the keywords in supporting a person's autonomy. Having a choice creates willingness and that generates a favourable environment to engage oneself in more workable situations and probably leads to better solutions because of the feeling of autonomy and volition. Extrinsic control tends to get people's attention only toward the outcome rather than the process. Thus, "choice" as a keyword has become one of my focal points.

## **II.4 Extrinsic Motivators**

In an education context, grades are the basic means of extrinsic control (Deci & Flaste, 1995) and they are considered incentives and motivators to learn better. However, numerous experiments by Ryan, Deci and Grolnick disprove this statement. Extrinsic motivators undermine the intrinsic desire. "Those who learn the material without expecting to be tested display superior conceptual understanding relative to those who were expecting to be tested" (Deci & Flaste 1995:48). The experiments have also brought out additional interesting information. When learning in order to be tested, the students memorise facts better than concepts. They also forget more and quicker in a shorter period of time. Furthermore, it can be said that in long-term learning the strategy of giving tests may not necessarily be productive. On the other hand, grades have a feedback component and they tell the teacher how the students are doing. But it is still dangerous to draw conclusions on academic development based only on grades.

Nevertheless, rewards and other control methods do have motivating power. When people behave to get rewards, it lasts only until the rewards stop coming. But normally the performances that are being rewarded are the ones that are expected to last longer when the rewards have stopped. Another issue is the fact that people tend to choose the easiest and quickest way to receive the prize, but it is not always the one that is wanted to be promoted (Deci & Flaste, 1995). Furthermore, by claiming that we are motivated by extrinsic factors, like rewards, we do what we think we must do, and yet, this does not come from our inner wishes, but from outer forces and we become more alienated from our intrinsic motivation (Vansteenkiste et al 2005).

The most effective use of rewards is in non-controlling ways - in this case the results may be quite positive. When the students are allowed to participate in decision making where they are offered the opportunity to have a choice, it will

lead to intrinsic satisfaction by developing their autonomy through a supportive approach (Deci & Flaste, 1995). A less important issue concerns teacher's self-reflective activities. When focusing on extrinsic motivators they often pay inadequate attention to where the real problems may be - unstimulating lessons, unbalanced challenge, poor communications, and low teacher enthusiasm. In other words - the lack of a constructivist teaching-learning perspective.

A generally approved finding is that a reward meant for an intrinsically interesting task actually leads to a decrease in intrinsic motivation. Controlling rewards lead people to attribute their behaviour to external factors and to lose a sense of self-determination.

## **II.5 Challenge, Competence, Curiosity, Context**

Besides the Deci's (Deci & Flaste, 1995) theories, there is another interesting approach to intrinsic motivation by Lepper and Henderlong. They propose four important factors that are essential to increase intrinsic motivation (Lepper & Henderlong 2000). Firstly, the level of challenge during the classwork determines the engagement. The task should neither be too easy nor too difficult. Secondly, feeling competent is an inside motivator in proceeding with studies. Thirdly, curiosity is a natural motivator, so why not provide a similar situation in the classroom? And finally, learning is more effective when the context is linked to the student's interests outside school.

## **II.6 Conclusion**

To summarize, it can be said that the constructivist theory of learning encourages and accepts the students' autonomy and initiative. Combining the use of authentic material with guided instructions through the interactive methodology gives the students a supportive environment for resultive learning. Both, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation depend on time and context. They can exist within an individual at the same time. Intrinsic motivation is linked to personal experience, better conceptual comprehension and greater creativity. It is contextual in nature. Extrinsic motivation, on the contrary, is based on something extraneous to the activity or to the person. The positive effect of the use of motivators, which in the education field is generally external ones, depends largely on the fact that students must see a relationship between their behaviour and outcome. The motivators must be relevant to their work and lives. Students' intrinsic motivation can be influenced by challenge, curiosity, control and fantasy. Being given the possibility to choose adds intrinsic satisfaction and also supports the feeling of competence and effectiveness in the task.

## **III. Methodology**

### **III.1 Presentation of the courses**

Prior to the description of the method used in this study I will introduce these two tailor-made courses that I created for pupils aged 14-16 in order to raise their motivation towards English culture. Both courses are based on the constructivist

learning principle (Jonassen 1990) - in order to learn new information students need to integrate it with their previous knowledge which in many cases is quite poor.

By the age of 14-16, the majority of students have shown their learning abilities. Students with a good sense of language skills learn fast and they generally are well-focused on new material. The problem concerns students with lower results who usually tend to lose interest in a foreign language when they do not have additional help and external rewards. They very often seem to have a fixed negative image of themselves. Raising their interest and intrinsic motivation through challenging activities should be one of the main goals. Therefore, at the Püünsi School, a small village school near Tallinn where I teach English, I have designed two different courses for my students in addition to their regular English lessons. These courses involve a cultural program for all the students aged 14-16 who are in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> form in accordance with the Estonian school system. Special culture lessons are provided in many secondary schools but it certainly is not common during the pre-secondary school period. Cultural Objectives are very vaguely determined in the National Curriculum, so my students and I can plan lessons according to our own priorities as long as the English language is used as the means to obtain our common goals.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> form (pupils aged 14-15), there is a weekly course called Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Society and Culture. Advancing step-by-step, we start with the basic events of British history and then we proceed with the culture of the British Isles. Here the term “culture” is very broad. It involves geography, interactive use of maps, regional variations, language, dialects, education, life style, sports, etc. Later on the same pattern is repeated with the USA and Canada, Australia and New Zealand. However another very important motivational factor, emphasised by Deci (Deci & Flaste 1995), is students’ contribution to lesson designing. Each group of students has a possibility to choose certain issues to focus on. As a teacher I try to be there in order to guide them and not to lecture. It would be very easy to provide them with new material in a traditional lecture form. However, instead pupils work together in pairs, in groups, or alone trying to make associations between previous and new knowledge.

Keeping Lepper and Henderlong’s (2000) advice in mind, we try to involve activities that are challenging, provide enough curiosity and that are not too easy or too hard to complete. A moment of contextual curiosity is definitely present as foreign travel is popular and everybody dreams of travelling abroad. As a person who has travelled a lot, I have had an opportunity to use colourful photographic material from different English speaking countries. I often offer my students these materials for group work as a source of information they can use in order to find answers to posed challenges.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> (pupils aged 15-16), there is a weekly course called “Introduction to British and American Literature”. In many course books there are special pages or sections that treat different aspects of literature. However the problem, according to English teachers I have spoken to, is that they do not have enough time to concentrate on the literature because they feel time would be better spent on the

important tasks of grammar and practising simple communication skills. Therefore teachers often just quickly go through the texts about literature or in some cases they do not feel competent enough to provide a more profound discussion about the literary issues. It is for these reasons that I took it as a challenge to prepare a more in-depth course which falls under the national curriculum as an additional English lesson. The course is built on chronological principle and is illustrated with examples of authentic material about each author presented. And again, students have a say in choosing authors, especially contemporary ones. We start with the Celtic and Roman period, continue briefly with the Middle Ages and finish with students' favourites, like Tolkien or Rowling, etc. Meanwhile we talk about writers and poets they ought to know or have heard of, such as William Shakespeare or Jack London, etc. During these lessons their skills are further developed in comprehensive reading, creative writing and analysis.

There were also ethical issues one had to be aware of in this kind of assignment. As a researcher, I had to keep in mind that my pupils were in transitionary age period, i.e. they were not sufficiently mature to reflect their own thoughts, nor were they young children any more (Harmer 1991; Kalantzis & Cope 2008:99). Furthermore, they did not yet possess a well developed ability to analyse their own experiences. Ensuring voluntary participation and providing an overview of the process was also guaranteed

### III.2 Method

The qualitative research was followed by the principles of narrative research. Narrative research is the study of how different humans experience the world around them (Connelly & Clandinin 1990). Narrative data can be based on interviews, focus group discussions, observations and even on written text, such as biographies, diaries, notebooks, and other documents (Polkinghorne 1988).

By using narrative approach, I attempted to increase my understanding of whether the desired outcome of my courses really meets the students' expectations, and whether the expected result meets the real outcome at the end of the course. Narratives indicate visibly how individual members of society create meanings and coherence in their lives (Bruner 1986; Polkinghorne 1991). Since the narrative approach allowed me to use several techniques, such as focus group discussion, the use of notebook documentation and observations, I considered the narrative research the most suitable approach to explore my students' conception of the whole course.

My own interest in this study was to compare whether narratives that were participants' first-person accounts of their experience of the course correspond to their learning results reflected in the official notebook and to my interpretations based on observations. The narratives were processed through three stages. Firstly, classroom observations were carried out; secondly, an interview was conducted with alumni students; and thirdly; analysis of class notebook was done.

### **III.3 Sample, Data collection and Instruments**

Narrative analysis was carried out through three steps. The first step involved classroom observations which took place during two consecutive years. An Estonian school year is divided into four terms. In each term I made one written observation in both forms, thus altogether there were 16 observations conducted. While taking notes I paid attention to the following aspects: how engaged my students were in completing different tasks, i.e. how did they react to given tasks; did their attitude change during completing the task and how did they feel after completing the task. On average there were 16 students participating in the observations.

The next step was carrying out a focus group interview. The Püünsi Basic School has a tradition to summon an informal meeting of its alumni once a year during the school's anniversary in autumn. I took advantage of the situation and made a proposition to the alumni to be interviewed through a focus group discussion. All together there were 4 alumni who agreed to be interviewed in a group, 3 girls and 1 boy. The choice was rather random. Two of them had studied in the same class and two others had studied in different classes. One of them showed brilliant results in all school subjects and managed to graduate with honours diploma; another one had had mediocre results; the third one was good at languages and mediocre at other subjects and the last one was actively training for sports competitions and therefore school grades were not of major importance. The interview lasted for 20 minutes. I asked them to retrospectively recall their memories and thoughts about what they had experienced during my cultural courses. The data analysis was done according to the narrative approach (Gay et al 2006). Firstly, I transcribed all the raw data. Secondly, I identified certain themes which will be further on referred to as categories. Thirdly, I organised pupils' stories into a chronological sequence.

The last step was to analyse the pupils' grades in the official Class Record in order to understand how students were making progress in above-mentioned courses and I compared the results to the ones of the simple course of English language.

## **IV. Discussion**

This chapter discusses the results of the qualitative research which consisted of three parts: observation, focus group interview and comparison of pupils' grades.

### **IV.1 Observations**

The first step was to analyse sixteen observations made in the course of two years. The observations aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

- How did pupils react to given tasks?
- Did pupils' attitudes change during the completion of the task?
- How did pupils feel after completing the task?

According to my observations there is a clear sequence in pupils' reaction to given tasks. It depends strongly on their previous experience of the given task, i.e. whether they have had a similar task and what have been the subconscious experiences towards that task. Anything that may be new to pupils tend to be welcomed rather negatively as the first impression. Quite often questions with a specific irritating intonation were asked:

Why?(pupil S)

Why do we have to do it? (pupil M)

Can I do it at home?(pupil K)

Is it necessary?(pupil J)

*I don't understand anything. Do I have to do it?(pupil O)*

After having explained to them or discussed it together or given an example, the second reaction could be noticed - silence. That was a very important sign to me, as the pupils were obviously contemplating on how to solve the task. The complaining had stopped. Even if the task was a group or pair work, there was a pause of silence in order to understand the personal engagement in this task. In the majority of cases an active work followed. As a teacher I passed around the classroom monitoring what they were doing. Since the classroom was really tiny there was no danger of missing some pupils' work. The third reaction had two kinds of forms. Whether it was a satisfaction reflected on their happy faces or by saying:

*- I like it! (pupil M)*

*- That's not so difficult as I thought! (pupil K)*

*- It's interesting! (pupil J)*

Some students even asked for more similar tasks which also proved their satisfaction. Or, they showed their boredom that may have been the result of a too easy, or on the contrary, of a too difficult task so that they had lost their interest and they started to deal with non-learning activities, such as discussion on irrelevant topics, etc. I detected a very important factor - the same kind of tasks did not necessarily receive the same kind of reactions. It largely depended on the whole group of pupils, their prior knowledge and classroom attitudes. Moreover, some pupils as leaders of the class played a remarkable role. As my intention was to learn by observing them how to raise their intrinsic motivation I sometimes had to use external methods as "present the task in a more pleasant way". In case of the leaders of the class who usually held negative opinion towards unfamiliar issues, the task had to be even more attractive, as sometimes others followed their example. Yet again, the groups were small and the general attitude was rather positive in each class.

In each group there were a couple of pupils with very poor knowledge in English or culture. Their reaction actually did not differ from those of the better students as far as they felt that I as a teacher believed in them and encouraged them to use additional material, such as dictionaries.

To conclude the analysis of the observations I would interpret my pupils' behaviour as typical to their age, as also seen by many psychologists - during the transitional age pupils show their negative emotions towards anything new and after getting

acquainted with the task they become to feel at ease and they even start to like it. Providing pupils with different types of tasks helped to maintain or even to raise their intrinsic motivation as their full engagement could be noticed.

## IV.2 Focus Group Interview

The interview took place in a very friendly atmosphere. It could be felt that no one influenced other pupils' responses and that they were rather talkative to express their feelings. In the course of narrative study (Connelly & Clandinin 1990) it is very important that:

“The relationship between participants and researcher be a mutually constructed as caring, respectful and, characterized by an equality of voice”.

I asked interviewees to retrospectively contemplate on their experiences during my cultural courses. I specifically did not ask about the role of motivation as I did not want to lead or mislead their own thoughts and I hoped to read out the motivational aspects from their answers. Therefore I asked:

What kind of tasks did you like the most and why?

In the narrative approach it is essential that the researcher does not provide the interviewees with his/her own ideas or judgements even if asked (Gay et al 2006). It was hard indeed but in order to maintain objectivity I did not interfere with their discussion. When analysing the transcription of the interview some very particular categories emerged:

- I Novelty
- II Diversity
- III Satisfaction

Each category will be discussed separately in the following chapters.

### IV.2.1 Novelty

Under “Novelty” the pupils mostly meant the new approach to the learning process itself in the classroom, as learning methods were anything but traditional.

D: “I thought that posters were made for fun or for advertising a product, I could have never believed you can study with them, that I could actually learn to “read” them.”

However, pupils' narratives indicated clearly that different teachers in their school use quite often different kinds of active learning methods, but these elements are mostly meant for warm-up exercises or to change the subject. During the above-mentioned courses they were allowed to move around in order to use posters on the walls or even to look for “hidden answers” in the school house - according to their narratives that kind of activities had left them an impression of novelty. At that time even using Powerpoint Presentations were not as widely used as today and seemed to them as a rather new method. Anything that seems new helps to raise intrinsic motivation through the personal curiosity (Deci & Flaste 1995; Lepper & Henderlong's 2000).

### IV.2.2 Diversity

Another category that emerged from their narratives could be interpreted as “Diversity”. Since the aim of these courses is not English language itself but broadening cultural knowledge and facts, it is possible to practise as many teaching-learning methods as possible.

A: “It is great that we did so many different things.”

Yet again, we cannot forget about another essential factor - pupils’ participation in designing the lesson plan. Asking for pupils’ opinion, advice or help leaves them, on the one hand, the feeling of being an equal partner, and, on the other hand, the responsibility. Both factors play an important role in constructivist learning theory (Bruner 1990; Jonassen 1990). In addition, providing choice supports their intrinsic motivation.

### IV.2.3 Satisfaction

The third category could be referred to as “Satisfaction”. In their narratives the pupils explained that during the period of these courses they were not contemplating on the usefulness; they would rather appreciate their courses based on simple personal likes or dislikes. But now, reflecting on their experiences as alumni, they were more able to retrospectively analyse their feelings.

B: “I wasn’t keen on reading books, but knowing the life of authors I now find it so interesting to read their stories, because I know why they have written something and what they mean with it”.

Moreover, some of them felt that they have had several occasions where cultural knowledge were of good help to them. For example, when studying at secondary school or when participating in different student quizzes.

C: “I could impress my friends by quoting Shakespeare’s monologue.”

It was true, we did learn Shakespeare and the pupils had to learn 10 lines of the famous “To be or not to be” by heart. But the activity was completely volunteer as constructivist learning principle does not approve learning by heart, instead developing an ability to create associations. In our case, it was pupils’ own will and everybody learnt it by heart and they tried hard to make it sound professional. Obviously they enjoyed it a lot, which also implies that the pupils were intrinsically motivated (Deci & Flaste, 1995). Of course, the idea of impressing ones friends by quoting Shakespeare may sound a little naive or childish, it should, however, be considered from the humorous point of view.

### IV.3 Comparison of pupils’ grades

In this study I compared the pupils’ grades of my courses to those of English language course. The comparison aimed at understanding whether the motivational aspect had an impact on pupils’ grades. Since the positive effect of constructivist learning environment on pupils’ motivation has already

been confirmed by the results of observations and focus group discussion, it seemed somehow relevant to compare their grades to the ones received in English language course. As I had anticipated, the result of the comparison suggested higher average grades among the majority of pupils. The increase of the average grade is mostly due to the fact the tests that were used to measure pupils knowledge were about overall facts and not about language structures or grammatical values. I tried to use as little assessment as possible, because according to Deci's theory (1995) grades play an important role in extrinsic motivation as a type of awards and the use of extrinsic motivators is undesirable if we want to raise intrinsic motivation.

## V. Conclusion

The present research attempted to review and integrate the available literature on constructivist learning theory and motivational aspect and to test empirically the relevant factors on the pupils. This research was performed in qualitative narrative method where observations, a focus group interview and a comparison of grades were used as instruments. The main purpose of this study was to study the impact of constructivist learning environment on motivational aspects during the courses that I had designed together with my pupils. The results of this research indicate that when following the constructivist learning theory in the course of lesson planning, pupils' intrinsic motivation can be noticed and it also affects positively their learning outcome, i.e. their grades.

In a rather small group it is possible to create more intimate atmosphere so that pupils would feel at ease and express their opinions. The pupils aged 14-16 can be seen as quite sincere: when they like something they let you know about it and vice versa. While carrying out my observations I gradually started to realise what kind of activities turned out to be of higher motivational value. Reflecting my teaching methods through the analyses of my courses and of my pupils has been of major importance in developing the concept of my courses.

I have discovered answers to my questions about improving the quality and the content of my language lessons. It has not been easy, because what works with one group does not always work with another group. After having faced dull and bored students, I have asked myself what went wrong and why it interested one group and not another. Even events in society may have an influence on the working atmosphere in the classroom. The positive feedback of students has been a very important factor to continue with this kind of project.

When talking about the results from more general perspective, a positive effect can certainly be noticed - even the pupils with poor grades show greater engagement because their prior low self-esteem in English language course tends to fade away and become irrelevant. There have been very few pupils whose interest and motivation I was not able to improve. With pupils being constantly absent or randomly visiting my courses, I have not been able to establish a good relationship. However the reasons for these students' behaviour is often much more complicated and can reach beyond the teacher or school's control.

The present study posed some new questions that could be explored in the future, i.e. to study the motivational phenomenon called “*the Flow*” and described by Csikszentmihalyi (1988) among pupils and to study teachers’ motivational aspects as well.

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