Everyday English

An attempt to connect the English in the student’s spare time to the lessons in school

INGELA ANDERSSON
CHRISTINA MONONEN
HELENA SUNDQVIST

TEACHER EDUCATION
VT 2004
Department of Educational Sciences
Supervisor: Cathrine Norberg, Marie Nordlund
ABSTRACT

In this study we carried out and evaluated a lesson project based on the English that students come across in their spare time. The lesson project took place during our teaching practice at a high school in Luleå. At first an observation was made in order to see if three different teachers (our supervisors) connected the students’ spare time to the lessons in school. After that, the lesson project was carried out and later it was evaluated with questionnaires for the students and interviews with our supervisors. The results of the evaluation showed that the lesson project was successful. This way of working increased the students’ motivation and made the lessons more fun and instructive for them. A conclusion that can be drawn is that it is fully possible to connect the lessons in school to the English in the students’ spare time and still follow the guidelines of the National Curriculum and the Course Goals.
# Table of Contents

## Abstract

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Background
   1.1.1 Motivation
   1.1.2 Connection between school and daily life
   1.1.3 Influence and responsibility in school
   1.1.4 Variation
   1.1.5 National Curriculum and Course Goals

1.2 Aim

1.3 Method and Material
   1.3.1 Target of Investigation
   1.3.2 Observations
   1.3.3 Lesson Project
   1.3.4 Questionnaires
   1.3.5 Interviews

### 2 Presentation and Analysis

2.1 Observations

2.2 Lesson Project

2.3 Questionnaires

2.4 Interviews

### 3 Summary and Conclusion

### 4 Works Cited or Referred to

Printed Sources

Electronic Sources

Appendix A: Enkät (Questionnaire)
1 Introduction

Due to changes in society the English language exists as a natural part of young people’s lives today. They come across English when they watch TV and movies, listen to music, play computer games and use the Internet.

During teaching practice throughout our teacher education we have realized that a major part of the English lessons are quite traditional in the sense that they are based on textbooks with audiotapes, exercises and glossaries.

In this study we want to connect the English the students come into contact with in their spare time to the English lessons in school. In our future profession as high school teachers we want to make the lessons more appealing, interesting and meaningful to the students in order to increase their motivation. In addition to this, the teaching will be based on what the students want and this will allow a broader variety when it comes to the contents of the lessons.

1.1 Background

This section will give background information on five areas that are of relevance to this study, namely motivation, connection between school and daily life, influence and responsibility in school, variation and National Curriculum and Course Goals.

1.1.1 Motivation

Students of today live in a very stressful environment. They do not only have many subjects to deal with in school but also experience demands from teachers, friends, parents and the rest of society. Many of them merely attempt to get through school with sufficient grades and their motivation for the different subjects is not always at its best.
Given that motivation is necessary for students’ learning, the latter will automatically be inhibited when there is a lack of motivation (Imsen 2000:279).

The term motivation is many times used in positive contexts where the student curiously faces new and unknown things. Imsen (2000:272) describes the motivated student as faithful, positive, obliging and always interested and active. The description of the motivated student naturally appeals to any teacher but the degree of motivation varies. Not all students like all subjects and teachers are bound to end up with students that dislike their subject. Moreover, the material that is used in teaching plays an important role. The students have to consider the material to be meaningful or else the motivation will decrease.

Consequently, motivation plays an important role for students’ accomplishments and there are several ways of increasing the motivation. Certainly a teacher’s devotion is of great importance. By listening, encouraging and helping the students the teacher has a lot to gain. The students’ personal interests should be acknowledged and there should also be a variation in the method and content of the teaching. Moreover, the students should be participating in the planning and in that way create responsibility, happiness, realistic and reasonable demands and thereby get a feeling of having succeeded in their schoolwork (Ericsson 1989:75-76).

There are two different kinds of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic motivation is controlled by hope of a reward or to reach an aim that is actually unimportant in itself. Examples of this are when students carry on their studies only in order to get good grades, or when a child is given chocolate for having finished a meal. The intrinsic motivation is natural and formed by the person’s inner will. Activity is entirely based on an interest a student might for example collect stamps only because it is fun. However, it is important to remember that these two forms of motivation have one thing in common, namely a desire to be successful, no matter if there is inner happiness involved or hope for a future reward (Imsen 2000:278).
The intrinsic motivation is essential in learning. The studies must be based on needs and interests. Motivation originates in authentic curiosity that makes the students eager to learn, understand and experience new things. This pure intrinsic motivation constitutes the most effective form of learning. The extrinsic motivation is also important since a student might work harder when there is something to work for, such as grades, praise, status or other rewards (Ericsson 1989:141-142).

Only 50 per cent of the students in Sweden think that most teachers are able to motivate and inspire their students (Attityder till skolan 2000). Senior high school students are especially critical towards their teachers and the quality of their education. They claim that it is not meaningful and motivating to go to school, which might have caused a high rate of absence among students. This problem makes it necessary for schools to develop teaching methods where students are a central part of their education. School work should be organized in a way that makes it meaningful and interesting for the students.

1.1.2 Connection between school and daily life

Developments in society demand alteration in school education. Political, economic, social and technological progress result in rapid and radical changes. All aspects of life are increasingly internationalised, and the possibility of contacts with other countries and cultures has increased considerably as a result of developments in communications. The changes undergone by contemporary society therefore have significant practical implications for teaching (Sandahl 1997).

Today, the media is integrated in everyday life. News and information about what is happening in the world reach us in no time through satellite TV and the Internet. The media is a condition for the global world we live in today, Nilsson (1998:101) writes in a study about the spare time and culture of adolescents. Through the media young Swedish people have a great number of opportunities to come into contact with English outside school. According to the study about Swedish students’ view of English made by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Ericksson 2002) approximately a third of
Swedish students’ knowledge of English comes from the media. Adolescents are surrounded by the English language in their spare time; they watch TV and movies in English with or without Swedish subtitles, they listen to music with English lyrics, they play computer games and spend several hours a week online on the Internet.

Despite vast influence from the media, the main source of English in Swedish teenagers’ lives are the lessons in school, 55 per cent of the Swedish students’ knowledge of English come from school. Swedish students are good at English and they are also confident in their ability (Ericksson 2002). Swedish teenagers come across English in their spare time and at school and they have a positive attitude towards English, both as a language and as a subject in school. However, many students have the conception that the English lessons are rather traditional and almost exclusively based on a textbook.

In Sweden, school is more or less obligatory for 12 years and a condition for a meaningful and lifelong learning is that the students’ experiences of life are connected to their education. Children, adolescents and adults learn better when they are given examples they recognize and can relate to. The encounter between school knowledge and experiences of everyday life is crucial, not only for the students’ attitudes towards school but also for young people’s perception of themselves. If the students are not able to keep up during the lessons their self-esteem is affected in a negative way. It is very hard to motivate students to do something they think that they are bad at (Egerbladh & Tiller 1998:13-17).

1.1.3 Influence and responsibility in school

All children and young people shall have the freedom to express their own opinions in all matters that concern them and their opinions shall be respected. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12 states that:
1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (The Convention on the rights of the Child, article 12).

Swedish high schools offer students considerable influence over the content and planning of the education, as well as influence over schooling in general. A student has the right to choose a program and a specialization. Every national program also leaves room for course options. The number of options varies from program to program. Students can take part in planning and assessment of lessons and they are also able to choose subjects, topics and activities (Attityder till skolan 2004).

Student influence can be defined both as formal structures such as students’ councils and conferences as well as influence on different aspects of daily life in school, for example the school environment and school work. According to a survey made by The Swedish National Agency for Education (Attityder till skolan 2004), students want to have influence on tests, homework and working methods as well as on what they have to learn for each particular subject. Furthermore, they want to be able to decide what school they want to go to. Only 4 out of 10 students think that they are able to have influence on what they learn in school. The survey shows that school has not succeeded in establishing student participation; there is only a small number of students that actually think that they can influence their situation in school.

More or less all students want to have influence on their education. However, the responsibility that follows is not always positive for the students. Increased influence and participation imply at the same time increased responsibility and readiness to meet changes (Sandahl 1997). Many high school students are extremely busy with schoolwork and feel that student participation only increases their workload. They do not see influence as a good thing, but simply as more work. It can be hard to decide if it is too
much influence and responsibility but it is important that there is a mutual understanding between the teacher and the students. They need to be able to communicate with each other and decide when it is suitable or not to have student participation (*Inflytandets Villkor* 1998).

### 1.1.4 Variation

All students learn differently and therefore a varied teaching is necessary (Ericsson, 1989: 22). There are many ways to create variation; the teacher can vary the content, the way of teaching, how the students will be divided into groups, what material to use and how their achievements will be presented (Ericsson 1989:146).

The social background of the students varies. They have different expectations and sets of values concerning school and education. This makes the student groups quite heterogeneous and plays an important role for the activities in school. Naturally, this also contributes to large differences among the students when it comes to preparedness, motivation and will to learn in school (Ericsson 1989:24).

Levihn and Norman (1997) state the importance of variety in teaching and how students experience lack of variation:

> When students describe boring language teaching they often say that it is characterized by predictability, and that the teaching is based on the textbook and pursues a repeated pattern. Students want variation (Levihn & Norman 1997:3, our translation).

However, variation in itself is not sufficient. There has to be a carefully prepared strategy, whether the activities are teacher controlled or autonomous (Levihn & Norman 1997:3).
1.1.5 National Curriculum and Course Goals

The Education Act (2004), chapter 4, 2 §, states that students have the right to involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating school: “The students shall be able to have influence over how their education is designed. The extent and nature of the students’ influence shall be appropriate to their age and maturity” (our translation).

The Compulsory School Ordinance (2004) declares that in every class the students shall, together with the teacher, have the opportunity to deal with matters that are of common interest to the students. The Curriculum for the Non-Compulsory School System (Lpf 1994) states that the school has the important task of imparting, instilling and forming in students those values on which our society is based.

The democratic values of being able to influence, take responsibility and be involved shall embrace all pupils. The pupils’ responsibility for planning and managing their studies as well as their influence on not only the contents but also its structures, shall be important principles in education (Lpf 1994).

The school shall strive to ensure that all students take personal responsibility for their studies and their working environment, and that they actively exercise influence over their education. To take responsibility and to have influence strengthens the students’ confidence and ability to take initiative. All students shall have real influence over working methods, structures and the contents of the education. The teacher is obliged to plan the education together with the students and to make sure that the students have and use their influence (Lpf 1994).

The teacher shall organize and carry out the work in a way that the students experience that knowledge is meaningful and that their own learning makes progress. The students shall also gradually receive more and increasingly independent tasks to perform as well as increasing responsibility. The Curriculum for the Compulsory School, the Pre-School Class and the After School Centre (Lpo 1994) states:
It is not in itself sufficient that education imparts knowledge of fundamental democratic values. It must also be carried out using democratic working methods and prepare pupils for active participation in civic life. By participating in the planning and evaluation of their daily education, and exercising choices over courses, subjects, themes and activities, pupils will develop their ability to exercise influence and take responsibility (Lpo 1994).

The Course Goals for English state that students encounter many variants of English outside school today. They meet English in a variety of contexts: on TV, in films, in the world of music, via the Internet and computer games, through reading texts and via contacts with the English-speaking world (Programme Manual 2000). It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that all students can use English in a functional way in vocational and daily life and in further studies.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to carry out a lesson project based on the English the students acquire outside school as well as their interests. We will evaluate if this way of working makes the lessons more fun, motivating and instructive for the students. It is also our intention to see if there are differences between three groups of students that will participate in the lesson project. In addition to this, possible differences between boys and girls will be investigated.

1.3 Method and Material

For this study three methods of investigation were chosen. At first, an observation of the English lessons was done during the first week of teaching practice. After that a lesson project based on the students’ interests and spare time was carried out. A questionnaire was made to investigate the students’ attitude towards the project and to see if their motivation for the subject had increased at the end of the project (see Appendix A). Only the students answered the questionnaire. Finally, interviews with working teachers were made.
1.3.1 Target of Investigation

Three different English groups at a high school in Luleå, Sweden were chosen for the questionnaire and the lesson project in this study. A total number of 55 students answered the questionnaire. The students in these groups were attending the English A-, B- and C-courses. For the interviews our supervisors from the teaching practice were chosen.

1.3.2 Observations

Observation is the most fundamental method of investigation since a description of everything that is presently happening is given. An observation cannot explain why certain events happen or evaluate them (Kylén 1994:53).

The choice of observer is important, since the observer affects the interpretation of the results. To reduce the subjective influence on the observations the observer can make them more structured and often more mechanic (Kylén 1994:54-59).

The aim of the observations was to find out if the supervisors connected the students’ English lessons in school to the English the students come into contact with during their spare time. The conducted observations were not structured, which means that they were performed without a check list. Each teacher student observed the contents of the lessons during the first week of teaching practice. Neither the supervisors nor the students were aware of that they were being observed.
1.3.3 Lesson Project

Each teacher student was given three to four lessons during the teaching practice in order to carry out a lesson project. The intention of the lesson project was to focus on the students and their interests and the project was based on what they wanted to do during the English lessons. In order to do this a question sheet was prepared:

1. Do you get in contact with English outside school? If so, how?
2. Would you like to link “that English” to the English lessons in school? If so, how can we do that?
3. What would you like to do during the three to four lesson long project? Any suggestions or ideas?

During the first lesson of the project the students in each group (English A, B and C) answered the questions. Each teacher student made the compilation of the answers to base the lesson project on. Later the students were shown the compilation of their ideas to make it easier for them to see and remember what they had written. The lists of suggestions (table 1) were the foundation of the entire project and lessons were made by the teacher students with these lists as a starting point.

There were many different aspects that needed to be taken into consideration when planning the lessons, e.g. time and access to DVD and VHS-players. Since each group had its own plan, the lessons turned out very different. At the end of the project, students in the three groups answered a questionnaire.
Table 1: The students' suggestions for the lesson project. The table shows what the students in the three groups wanted to do during the lesson project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH A</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze music texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf the web</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read US Newspapers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen pals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read texts about famous people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat American food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH B</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write film reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate and discuss lyrics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and discuss articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV-programs and answer questions about it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch movies with English subtitles or no subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform a play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do a project and use English books and the Internet for research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get English pen pals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss different topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH C</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV-shows without subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch movies without subtitles and then discuss them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music, translate lyrics and analyze song texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk more, discuss in small groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen pals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to the US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.4 Questionnaires

When performing a study it is important to have a well defined aim and in order to do that one needs to know if the study is qualitative or quantitative. A quantitative study gives a countable result that can be used statistically. A disadvantage with a quantitative study is that it does not provide a deeper understanding of the results, they are merely numbers. A qualitative study provides the deeper understanding that the quantitative study lacks, and it is very common to use these two different methods together since they complement each other (Trost 2001:15-17, 22).

The purpose of the questionnaires used in this study was to see how the students had experienced the lesson project and what they thought about it. The first questions were scale questions with a numeric scale ranging from one to five, in order to facilitate the statistical processing of the questionnaire. The students answered the questionnaires during the last lesson of the lesson series. The last three questions were open and qualitative which gave the students a chance to express their opinions more freely.

1.3.5 Interviews

An interview is a conversation between two or more people. The basic principle of the interview is that the interviewer wants certain information and will stimulate the interviewee to tell or answer questions which can provide that information, as well as to take notes of the conversation. In less structured interviews the interviewer has a number of question areas that will be covered. For every question one lets the interviewees talk freely and then the interviewer controls the conversation in order to get the desired information (Kylén 1994:38).

After the teaching practice was finished, the supervisors were interviewed. The interviews were partly structured but they also allowed the interviewees to speak freely from five different topics:
• Motivation
• Connection between school and daily life
• Influence and responsibility in school
• Variation
• National Curriculum and Course Goals

The aim of these interviews was to find out what the supervisors thought about the lesson project. At first the supervisors were asked how they thought that the topics had been involved during the lesson project and then how they involve these topics in their own teaching.

2 Presentation and Analysis

The results from three different methods of investigation, namely observations, questionnaires and interviews will be presented and analyzed in this section. We will also present and analyze the lesson project.

2.1 Observations

Three different supervisors and their classes were observed during one week. The lessons below include all classes and later three of them were chosen for the lesson project. The observations were made in order to see if the supervisors connected the English lessons to the students’ spare time.

Lesson 1: The students prepared for speeches that they were to give the following week.

Lesson 2: A movie, Sex, Chips and Rock and Roll, was watched

Lesson 3: The students read a novel.
Lesson 4: At first the students were shown examples of good sentences from their own book reviews and then they made plans for coming lessons, where they requested more oral exercises. During what was left of the lesson the students talked in the whole class about their on-going school projects.

Lesson 5: The supervisor did a run-through on possessive pronouns. Then the students worked on their own with grammar exercises and when they had finished they continued to read their novels. While they were reading, the supervisor took out groups of four students and let them talk about their novels.

Lesson 6: In the beginning of the lesson the teacher student talked about the upcoming lesson project and gave the students some information on what was going to happen after their sports vacation. After that, the supervisor introduced the second part of an oral exercise, which they had begun the previous lesson. During that lesson the students had been given the task to bring a text of their own choice to school for the next lesson. The different texts were analyzed and discussed in groups of four to five students. The last fifteen minutes of the lesson were used to work with modal auxiliaries.

Lesson 7: The lesson began with a word check. Every student had prepared a wordlist of their own for this lesson and those who had not finished them during the word check. The students read their novels during what was left of the lesson. One group of students talked about their novels with the teacher student.

Lesson 8: There were only about 10 students present in this class and they read poems and analyzed them. They also wrote poems of their own.

Lesson 9: A couple of students took a re-sit in grammar while the rest of the class went to see a play in town.

Lesson 10: The students delivered speeches that they had worked on for a few weeks. The students had been able to choose what they wanted to talk about. The topics the
students had chosen to talk about were art, a Russian writer, the Aborigines in Australia, a student’s grandmother and dancing.

**Lesson 11:** The students took a listening comprehension test in order to practice for the upcoming national exams.

**Lesson 12:** The students were divided into groups and discussed a movie they had seen.

**Lesson 13:** Two American Mormon missionaries visited the class and talked about themselves and the United States.

The aim of the observations was to see if and how the supervisors connected the students’ daily lives to the lessons in school. Out of 13 observed lessons there is a clear connection in two of them, namely lesson six and ten. During lesson six the students had brought texts of their own choice to school. Most texts were lyrics from the students’ favorite songs, which obviously has a clear connection to their spare time. During the tenth lesson the students made oral presentations. The contents of the presentations varied since the students had been allowed to choose freely what topic they wanted to talk about. In this lesson there was a clear connection to the students’ spare time, because all students talked about an interest of theirs.

However, there are connections in other lessons as well but they do not seem to be intentional. These unintentional connections can be seen for example when the students are able to choose what novel they want to read. Though, not all students like to read and it is not always possible to find an interesting novel. Therefore the connection to the students’ spare time can be quite coincidental. To show movies can also be connected to the students’ spare time. However, the students seldom choose what movie to see. Instead it is common that the teachers make the choice and many times they are not aware of what the students are interested in. Consequently, if there is a connection to the students’ spare time it is arbitrary and totally depending on the teacher’s insight in the students’ interests.
To sum up, it is difficult not to come across the students’ interests and everyday lives when teaching, but the teachers do not appear to strive to make the connection.

2.2 Lesson Project

The lists presented in table 1 in section 1.3.3 were used to plan the lessons in the lesson project. The teacher students planned a lesson project in one course each. The lesson plans are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: The Lesson Project. The table shows a compilation of each teacher student’s lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English A</th>
<th>Lesson 1: During the first lesson the students had their National Listening Comprehension Exam. At the end they were given a wordlist and questions to the TV-program Lisa’s Rival (The Simpsons) that was to be watched the following lesson.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson 2: First the students read through the questions for the episode and then they watched it. After watching, the questions were answered in the whole class and then there was a test on the words that they had been given the previous lesson. After that they were meant to watch and translate the song Det gör ont by Lena Philipsson. However, the video was not working and instead the Listening Comprehension Exams were handed back. Homework for the next lesson was to find an article in English of their own interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson 3: During this lesson the students worked with their articles. At first they read them and picked out 20 words for homework, which they handed in. After that they prepared to present their article in smaller groups together with the teacher student. The groups that finished early played a card game where they practiced speaking. Homework, besides the 20 words, was to bring a song with lyrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson 4: At first they did the homework test where all filled in their own word lists. Afterwards each student played a part from their song and told the class why they like this particular music. Next they discussed some questions in groups about different computer games that involve a lot of killing. Each group presented their answers. At the end they played Jeopardy where the students were divided into teams. Finally they filled in the questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English B

Lesson 1: The teacher student showed the students a compilation of their answers from the lesson before and then introduced a reality TV theme. The students were given articles about reality TV celebrities, which they read through. Then they picked out words they thought were difficult and made a word list. The second half of the lesson the supervisor made preparations for the upcoming national test together with the students.

Lesson 2: The work with reality TV continued and the lesson started with a word check. After that the students sat in groups and discussed the concept of reality TV. Then the supervisor did a run-through on a grammar section. The rest of the lesson the students wrote a short essay on reality TV, which they handed in.

Lesson 3: The students watched an episode of the American TV-show *Friends*. During the show they answered a number of questions given to them by the teacher student. After the show they continued with a discussion about TV and reality shows. Those who had not finished their essays did that, while the others were handed back their essays along with direct feedback from the teacher student. At the end of the lesson the students who were present answered the questionnaire.

English C

Lesson 1: The first lesson started out with an episode of *The Simpsons*. The students were given questions to answer while they watched the TV-program as well as a glossary for homework. After that the students were divided into groups of four or five. Their assignment was to plan the perfect TV-evening from 6 p.m. to midnight. The task involved cooperation between the students since they had to agree on what TV-programs to include. At the end of the lesson all groups presented their TV-programs to the rest of the class.

Lesson 2: The students watched the movie *Finding Nemo* and the homework for next lesson was a glossary from the movie.

Lesson 3: During the third lesson with the teacher student the students started out by doing a vocabulary quiz. Then they were divided into groups and were given questions for discussion to the movie they had seen.

Lesson 4: The last lesson of the project included translating a song from Swedish into English. In pairs, all students translated Lena Philipsson’s *Det Gör Ont*, the Swedish entry in the Eurovision Song Contest. For the international final the song would actually be translated by the lyrics writer and the students would later be able to compare their own translations with the real one. At the end of this class the students presented their English translations, either by reading or singing. An oral exercise in the shape of a card game was played by the students who finished early.

When planning the lessons in the lesson project the students’ suggestions listed above were used. The time available for the lesson project was not sufficient to meet all students’ requests and therefore only a few of their ideas were carried out. The teacher
students selected which ideas were suitable for the lesson project. The selection was based on what the majority of the students had asked for as well as what was actually possible to carry out. Some ideas were left out, for example to perform a play because it is too time-consuming and to travel to the US because it is just not possible.

In order to evaluate the lesson project a questionnaire was made, and the results of the questionnaire will be analyzed below.

2.3 Questionnaires

A total number of 55 students from three different groups, English A-C, participated in the questionnaire (table 3).

Table 3: Participating students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A-course</th>
<th>B-course</th>
<th>C-course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were asked to evaluate the teacher students’ lesson project by answering a few questions. Question three to seven were graded on a scale with five steps, ranging from a great extent to a small extent. When processing the answers the scale was converted into a numeric scale of one to five, where five corresponds to a great extent. The value axis (y-axis) shows the mean values. The numeric scale facilitated the calculations of the mean values.

Figure 1 shows how the answers from question three were spread. Overall, the students have found the lessons instructive. However, a slight difference between boys and girls can be seen in the figure below.
Do you think that the lessons have been instructive?

Figure 1: Mean values of the answers from question three.

The following question was whether the students thought the lesson had been fun or not. In general the answers were positive, though the C-students had a higher average than the other groups (figure 2).

Do you think that the lessons have been fun?

Figure 2: Mean values of the answers from question four
The next question to be answered was if the students thought the lessons had been varied. Among the answers there are differences between boys and girls in all groups, but in group A the difference is more significant (figure 3).

In figure 4 below, the answers of question six are presented. The results show differences between boys and girls in all three groups. It can also be mentioned that the boys in group B had not experienced the lesson project to be particularly motivating.
The question whether the students have been able to influence the lessons or not shows that there is a big difference between the boys and girls in group B. In the C-course, the boys had a higher average than the girls, which is notable since that is the only question where the boys are more positive than the girls (figure 5).

![Graph showing the influence of lessons](image)

**Figure 5:** Mean values of the answers from question seven.

The students were asked if they thought that the lessons had been connected to their spare time and if so, how. Their answers showed that most of them thought so. This question had no set alternatives or scales. The students were given a few lines to write freely (figure 6).

![Graph showing connection to spare time](image)

**Figure 6:** Connection to spare time. The figure shows the answers from question eight.
Among students who thought that there was a connection to their spare time, movies, TV and music were the most common examples. A student wrote that: “Basically all lessons have been connected to my spare time, which is good”. Another student’s opinion was that: “I watch a lot of TV and the lessons have been connected to that”. A third student thought that the lessons had been connected to the spare time when watching a movie, listening to music and playing Jeopardy.

In the next question the students were asked about their influence in school in general. Out of the students who answered this question 25 believed that they have influence and 25 did not think that they have influence. Five students did not answer this question.

Finally, the students gave more suggestions on what to do during the English lessons, for example to read novels and write different kinds of texts, such as short stories, poems and fairy tales. Furthermore, they would like to work with cross-curricular activities as well as discuss and debate current events.

In general, the results of the questionnaire turned out to be quite positive. The aim of the lesson project was to make the lessons instructive, fun, varied and motivating. In addition to this, the purpose was to connect the lessons to the students’ spare time as well as to give them influence over the lessons. From the results the conclusion can be drawn that these goals have been fulfilled.

Overall, the girls’ answers turned out to be more positive than the boys’. A reason for this can be that very few boys participated in the questionnaire. Another explanation could be that boys in general seem to have a more negative attitude towards language studies. Moreover, all teacher students are females and this fact may have affected the contents of the lessons. For example, the Eurovision Song Contest and reality shows probably appeal more to girls.
When it comes to the question if the lessons have been fun, the C-students’ high average can be a result of the fact that their course is eligible as opposed to the A- and B-courses that are obligatory. Students who choose the C-course often have a special interest in English and their level of ambition is therefore often higher compared to the A- and B-courses.

The boys in group B had a low average throughout the questionnaire and a reason for this could be that this particular group of boys had a negative attitude towards most things in school. These boys also had a negative influence on each other during the lessons. The most extreme example of this can be seen in figure 5 where there is a significant difference between the girls’ and the boys’ opinions. The only occasion where the boys were more positive than the girls was on question seven where the boys in the C-course had a slightly higher average than the girls. The result may be a consequence of the fact that there were only three boys in this group and most likely all of them did an activity they had requested.

Almost every teenager watches TV and listens to music on a daily basis and therefore it was not difficult to make a connection to the students’ spare time. However, 16 per cent did not think that the lessons were connected to anything in their spare time. In conclusion, it is difficult to please all students, especially when the lesson project only lasted for a few lessons.

When it comes to influence in general in school, only 50 per cent of the students who participated in the questionnaire think that they have influence. The National Curriculum (cf. section 1.1.5) states that all students shall be able to influence, take responsibility and be involved in school. According to our study, this school has not managed to make the students feel that they have influence.

The students’ final suggestions on what to do during the lessons show that many of them are creative and that students can be used as a resource when planning lessons.
2.4 Interviews

Interviews with the supervisors were made separately by each teacher student. The presentation of the interviews is a summary of what was said during the conversations.

Supervisor A

Motivation
During the lesson project, the students were automatically more motivated according to the supervisor since they participated in planning the lessons. The supervisor, however, claims that no further motivation is needed since the students already know how important it is to learn English.

Connection between school and daily life
The supervisor thinks that it can be difficult to connect the lessons to the students’ spare time during a short time. Nevertheless, there was a clear connection to the students’ spare time during the lesson project. In the supervisor’s own teaching not much of the teaching is connected to the students’ spare time. Automatically it might be connected at times when the teacher plays music or shows a movie. However, these are seldom chosen by the students. At times they have current quizzes with questions from newspapers or news programs, although the students do not seem to be up to date and do not manage well on these quizzes. The supervisor also mentioned that the students should learn other things in school than what they learn during their spare time.

Influence and responsibility in school
During the lesson project the students were allowed to do what they wanted to as mentioned, but the supervisor also thought that the teacher student was good at listening at what the students had to say. According to the supervisor the student influence clearly worked. This teacher’s students are allowed to participate through evaluations and during lessons. For example they are told what they will work with during the semester and then they can decide if they want more or less of something or in what order they want to
complete them. They also decide in what way they want to present what they have learnt, e.g. through tests, orally or something written that they hand in.

Variation
During the lesson project all four basic skills, writing, speaking, reading and listening, were covered. Supervisor A always intends to have the four basic skills included in the lessons. Besides these four basic skills they might work with themes from the textbook, have grammar, listen to music or watch movies. They also have argumentative oral sessions. It is important to have a mixture of all kinds of teaching methods so that all the students at some point will be pleased.

National Curriculum and Course Goals
The supervisor thought that the teacher student clearly works towards the goals. Naturally the teacher always tries to plan the lessons according to the National Curriculum and existing Course Goals. Sometimes though, areas might be left out. However, the goals can be widely interpreted and according to the interviewee it is more or less impossible not to connect the teaching to the curriculum. At the end of every course the supervisor checks if something has been forgotten or left out. Would it be so that there is too little time left to manage all the items, the students decide which ones they find more important than others.

Supervisor B
Motivation
The supervisor states that when it comes to English as a subject, the students hardly ever need to be motivated, with a few exceptions of course. Moreover, the supervisor thinks that since the students come across English so much in their everyday lives, many students have started to realize why English is such a good and useful language to know.
*Connection between school and daily life*

The supervisor acknowledged a clear connection to the students’ spare time during the lesson project. The supervisor says that students can become more motivated by the English they come across outside school, but did not believe the knowledge they acquire can get them very far. Only a few students benefit from the English they come across outside school, since they know how to develop their acquired knowledge. The supervisor steadfastly believes that if English could be learnt from watching television, everyone would be really good at it, but that is not true and that indicates that you also need to work on your English.

*Influence and responsibility*

The supervisor thinks that it was good of the teacher student to let the students make requests for what they wanted to do during the lesson project, but was also of the opinion that it is very hard to please everyone. Some students did not like the reality TV theme and the supervisor thought that it might have been different if there had been more time for the project. When teaching, the supervisor lets the students hand in suggestions on what they want to do, and then the lesson plans are based on those suggestions. When it comes to student influence the supervisor believes that sometimes students can feel that they take on a part of the teacher’s job when they do their own planning and they often trust their teachers to know what they need to learn.

*Variation*

The supervisor thought that the teacher student’s lesson project was a good initiative, but that it required more time to profile a project like that. The lesson time available for the project was not enough. The ideas about reality TV were very modern in the supervisor’s opinion. When the supervisor makes lesson plans they are always four weeks long. Every week there is an approximately fifteen minute grammar part and the students always have thirty words for homework each week. Sometimes the supervisor lets the students watch a movie. The supervisor is of the opinion that it is impossible to conduct teaching if the teacher and students do not understand each other. In addition to this the supervisor said that there is no teacher that practices teaching with a textbook that the students read from
cover to cover. It is important to listen to the students and show them that their opinions are taken seriously. If the students are not interested the supervisor stated that a bit of diplomacy always works to have one’s way.

*The National Curriculum and Course Goals*

The supervisor thinks that when teaching it is not difficult to connect to the Curriculum and the teacher student’s lesson project was in line with the Course Goals. According to the supervisor most of the students are not interested in the Curriculum and the Course Goals. However, the supervisor believes that they can be used as motivators. In the supervisor’s C-course the students are more open to the Course Goals and accept the fact that there are national demands.

**Supervisor C**

*Motivation*

The teacher student was good at motivating the students, according to the supervisor. In order to motivate the students the supervisor has an individual talk with each student at the beginning of the course where the students are given the opportunity to tell the teacher what grade they aim at. During the semester the teacher and student can go back to this talk and discuss what needs to be done in order to get the desired grade. The supervisor often tries to give the students a proper introduction when a new subject is initiated. The students can also be motivated when they take part in the planning of the lessons. Another thing the supervisor does to motivate the students is to bring TV-programs, music and news into the classroom. The students are also often able to choose what they want to do among different assignments.

*Connection between school and daily life*

The teacher student made a connection to the students’ spare time by using TV-programs that young people watch and music that most of them listen to. The supervisor mentioned that the youth culture is everywhere and the lessons are often used to discuss current topics. This culture is also often represented in textbooks. It is important that the students
can talk about themselves, their interests, their families and friends in a correct way in English and they practice this a lot.

Influence and responsibility

The teacher student allowed the students to take part in the planning when they were asked what they wanted to do. The supervisor thinks it is important with student participation and allows the students to have influence, for example the students can take part when they plan the lessons. Students often want to decide in matters that concern them, but it is problematical when there is too much responsibility involved. They do not want any extra work. The students also bring things that they are interested in to class, for example when they give speeches they can talk about a hobby or an interest.

Variation

Supervisor C thinks that it is important to have a variety of teaching methods and contents during the lessons but at the beginning of the semester a textbook is generally used. After a while the supervisor more and more starts to use different things like newspaper articles, music, movies and analyses of music videos. There are several different things to do in the lessons, like computer programs for language and it is possible to work with cross-curricular activities. The supervisor also varies the lessons with different ways of working. The students work in groups, in pairs or alone and they make oral or written exercises. In addition to this the supervisor tries to vary the lessons so that all students get something out of them.

National Curriculum and Course Goals

In the lesson project the teacher student has included both goals from the Course Goals and the National Curriculum. At the beginning of each course the course goals and the grading criteria are shown to the students. The course goals determine the contents of the lessons and the supervisor discusses them with the students when it is time to plan the lessons. There are also national program goals for each high school program that need to be followed and in addition to this there are local school goals. The supervisor thinks that
the goals of the course as well as the National Curriculum are present in practically every lesson.

The interviews were intended to be a part of the evaluation of the lesson project. However, the supervisors did not have many comments about the lesson project and instead the interviews became discussions about the five topics (cf. section 1.3.5).

When it comes to how to motivate the students during the English lessons, supervisors A and B have quite similar opinions as opposed to supervisor C. Supervisors A and B are of the opinion that the students do not need to be motivated since the subject in itself is motivating enough. To some extent we agree with this statement, but we are also of the opinion that there is always a need for motivation in the classroom. Most students seem to acknowledge how important it is to learn English, but there will always be students who need additional motivation due to the fact that they are tired of school.

However, supervisor C actively tries to motivate the students in various ways and seems to be aware of the fact that student participation and variation create motivation. Not all students like all subjects and only 50 per cent of the students in Sweden think that their teachers are able to motivate and inspire them (cf. section 1.1.1). Consequently, teachers need to acknowledge the fact that it is important to motivate the students, since motivation plays a significant role in learning. Two out of three supervisors take for granted that their students are motivated. This possible lack of awareness may depend on the fact that the supervisors do not think that it is necessary to motivate the students.

The aim of this entire study has been to connect the English in the students’ spare time to the lessons in school. It is clear that the supervisors’ idea of such a connection is not the same as ours. The connection to the students’ spare time can easily be included as a natural part of teaching, for example by using grammar and vocabulary from a popular TV-show instead of a text in the text book. The supervisors, on the other hand, seem to be of the opinion that the English in the students’ spare time has a low status and a lot of time and effort is required for a connection to be made. The supervisors were also of the
opinion that students need to learn different things in school than in their spare time, and that those things, for example grammar, can only be taught traditionally. Our opinion on the other hand, is that to try new methods of teaching, including choice of material, can be rewarding for both students and teachers.

The students seem to have influence over working methods and structure, but not over the contents of the lessons. The supervisors try to give the students influence and they think that the students are satisfied with the influence they have. Sometimes the supervisors experience that their students do not want to have influence, but that can be a question of how the teacher presents it to them. If the students feel that they are forced to take on responsibility they might develop a negative attitude. We believe that students want to influence their situation in school and as a teacher it is important to let the students have the privileges of influence and create a more positive attitude towards school.

The supervisors try to vary the lessons by using the four basic skills, namely writing, listening, reading and speaking every lesson. Overall, the supervisors’ lessons are varied both when it comes to ways of working and contents. It appears to be important to the supervisors to adjust the contents of the lessons to suit all students.

All teaching is based on the National Curriculum and the Course Goals. The supervisors show the goals to the students and to some extent the goals are used as motivators. According to one of the supervisors, most students are not interested in the National Curriculum and the Course Goals. A reason for this can be that these documents are difficult to read and understand. Another reason can be that the students care more about what the teacher requires of them than what is stated in the Curriculum.
3 Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to carry out a lesson project and to evaluate it. We wanted to see if this way of working would make the lessons more fun, motivating and instructive for the students. In order to do this, different methods of investigation were chosen, namely observations, questionnaires and interviews. The methods of investigations were accounted for in section 1.3. At first observations were made to see how the supervisors connected the students’ spare time to the English lessons. Then the lesson project was carried out and the participating students answered the questionnaire. Finally, interviews with the supervisors were made. The interviews concerned five topics mentioned in section 1.3.5. In section 2 the results from the investigation, including the lesson project, were presented and analyzed.

In the analyses several conclusions were drawn. The observation showed that there were few connections between the lessons in school and the students’ spare time. Furthermore, it was found that most of the students who answered the questionnaire had a positive attitude towards the lesson project, the girls more than the boys. Approximately three out of four students acknowledged a connection to their spare time, which is a good result when the time available for the lesson project is taken into consideration. We believe that the number of satisfied students would have been even higher if there had been more time.

When it comes to influence and responsibility in general in school, 50 per cent of the students in this study experienced a lack of influence. In the interviews the supervisors seemed to be of the opinion that most students do not want any more responsibilities than they already have and that influence often means extra work for the students. We think that this might depend on how the teachers present the matter. The student influence does not seem to be satisfactory in this particular school but the questionnaire showed that the students in fact had influence over the contents of the lesson project.
In the interviews the supervisors thought that the teacher students had connected the students’ spare time to the lessons in school successfully. The lessons in the lesson project also followed the National Curriculum and the Course Goals.

To sum up, we believe that the connection between school and the students’ spare time is crucial and that the students will learn easier if the material is related to them. In this study we have shown that it is possible to carry out teaching connected to students’ spare time. We have also shown that it is rewarding since it is fun, instructive and motivating for both students and teachers.
4 Works cited or referred to

**Printed sources**


**Electronic sources**

http://www2.skolverket.se/BASIS/skolbok/webext/trycksak/DDD/1287.pdf
(21 april 2004)

(21 april 2004)


(21 april 2004)
The Compulsory School Ordinance - Grundskoleförordningen
http://rixlex.riksdagen.se/htbin/thw?%24%7BHTML%7D=SFST_LST&%24%7BOOHTML%7D=SFST_DOK&%24%7BSNHTML%7D=SFST_ERR&%24%7BMAXPAGE%7D=26&%24%7BTRIPSHOW%7D=format%3DTHW&%24%7BBASE%7D=SFST&%24%7BFREETEXT%7D=&BET=1994%3A1194&RUB=&ORG= (25 april 2004)

The Education Act - Skollagen
http://rixlex.riksdagen.se/htbin/thw?$%7BOOHTML%7D=SFST_DOK&$%7BSNHTML%7D=SFSR_ERR&$%7BBASE%7D=SFST&BET=1985%3A1100&$%7BTRIPSHOW%7D=format=THW (25 april 2004)

Appendix A: Enkät (Questionnaire)

1. Är du ☐ kille eller ☐ tjejer?  
2. Vilken engelskakurs läser du?  
   ☐ A  ☐ B  ☐ C

Lektionerna med lärarstuderanden

3. Har lektionerna varit lärorika?  
4. Har lektionerna varit roliga?  
5. Tycker du att det har varit bra variation?  
6. Har lektionerna gjort att du känner dig mer motiverad?  
7. Känner du att du fått vara med och påverka innehållet i dessa lektioner?

8. Har lektionerna varit kopplade till något du sysslar med under din fritid? I så fall vad?

9. Tycker du att du får vara med och påverka i skolan i överlag? ☐ Ja  ☐ Nej
   Ge exempel______________________________________________________________

10. Fler förslag på vad man kan syssla med på engelskalektionerna…

Tack för din medverkan!!!