What influences students’ motivation for learning English grammar?

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to investigate what influences students’ motivation for learning English grammar. As I analyzed previous research I came up with these questions: What different kinds of strategies seem to be the most motivating for the students? What kind of motivation do learners have for grammar? Are learners positive or negative towards grammar, does their motivation come from within themselves or does it come from elements outside themselves? How important is it for learners that what they study is meaningful for them? How important is the teacher – student relationship for motivation? What do learners think of Task-based teaching? What are the best ways of learning? Through a questionnaire that was given to students of two classes at a Swedish upper secondary school, I wanted to see learner’ opinions about motivation and grammar. The questionnaire was given to 54 students and of these I could use 36. Generally students were positive towards grammar and thought that the teacher-student relationship was to some extent important for learning grammar. The biggest source of motivation was to have a good grade and it was clear that they learn grammar differently. It seemed to be important for them to know why you learn something. Students thought that “teacher talking” was a good way to learn grammar but not a good way to make grammar interesting and motivational.
1 INTRODUCTION

General outline

This paper is about motivation and English grammar. Based on previous findings in this area I have been investigating what students at a Swedish upper secondary school think about learning and motivation for English grammar. The paper consists of the previous findings, description of how I did my research, the results and thoughts about what this research implies.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to investigate what influences learners’ attitudes towards learning English grammar. As a student teacher the question of teaching grammar is important for me and it will be in my coming profession as a teacher. I have myself had some different teachers with different philosophies about how to teach English grammar. For me some of these philosophies have been motivating me for grammar and some have not. A few times I have tried to teach grammar and I have noticed that my own and other people’s attitude and motivation for learning English grammar has been different through time and by different teacher personality. I wondered why some think that English grammar is important and why they are motivated to learn more while some are not. The setting in which I carried out this investigation was in a Swedish upper secondary school. Here the teacher leads the lessons so an important and central side of my investigation was how the teacher can work to create and inspire positive attitudes towards grammar. What influences motivation for grammar is good to know for an English teacher; with this in mind better and more relevant plans for lessons can be made.

Development of research question

The main question is as written before: “What influences students’ motivation for learning English grammar”. Other perspectives that will be investigated are: What different kinds of strategies seems to be the most motivating for the students? What kind of motivation do learners have for grammar? Are learners positive or negative towards grammar, does their motivation come from within themselves (intrinsic) or does it come from elements outside of themselves (extrinsic)? How important is it
for learners that what they study is meaningful for them? How important is the teacher – student relation for motivation? What do learners think of Task-based teaching? What are the best ways of learning?

Literature
Important literature for this paper has been Ruin (1996), Widdowson (1991) and Dörnyei and Schmidt (2002). This is literature that I chose because of its relevance to motivation and learning.

Method of investigation
For my investigation I chose to use a questionnaire. This is a quantitative method that makes it possible for me to have many responses. If I had chosen a qualitative method such as interviews are it would have been hard to get many responses.

Principal results
Through my investigation I saw that students generally are positive towards learning English grammar. An important factor when it comes to teaching grammar and to make it interesting is variety. In the way students responded it can be said that students learn grammar in many different ways. It seems like it is important for learner’s motivation that they know why they do something. The biggest source of motivation towards learning English grammar according to my results is to get a good grade. An interesting outcome was that learners thought that teacher talking time is good for learning but not that good for making it interesting.
2 BACKGROUND

This is previous research about motivation and learning English grammar.

2.1 Teaching with variety

Ruin (1996) presents a study of learner’s attitude towards grammar, how important motivation is to reach the given goals of the subject. She also considers how previous experience matters for learning. Students are asked what they think of grammar and how they learn the best.

Ruin has made a questionnaire where she asks University students what their attitude towards grammar is. Grammar is here understood as specifically looking and analyzing how language is built and how you can create a good piece of language (this questionnaire looked mostly at writing). Students were put together in groups based on how strong they were in English based on their grades. The research showed that most of the students (weak or strong didn’t matter) were positive to studying grammar. Ruin states that students that were seen as the best, the ones who were most precise in their language had the biggest motivation for learning more. She discusses how this might show that this group has developed the most because they have had the feeling of being successful in that way of learning grammar that they have been exposed to. There was just a small percentage that was purely negative to grammar. Students who in some way were negative often thought that grammar was important.

Ruin notices different ways of teaching grammar and she is aware that some students might learn from one way but have difficulties learning from another way of teaching.

Ruin stresses the significance of that student are different from each other and learn the best from different teaching. Ruin draws the conclusion of her questionnaire that the successful students had the biggest motivation for learning grammar. One assumption that you can make is that they have been successful because the way of teaching has suited their way of learning. She claims that students benefit from different teaching. Maybe some have better chances to be
successful in grammar because they like the method that is used. If success is important for motivation to learn more, than teaching with variety becomes crucial. Widdowson (1991) also writes that learners are different and do not benefit from the same things at different stages of their learning. McGroarty (2002: 69-89) stresses the importance of teaching with variety since learners are different and do not find the same activities and tasks as motivational and good for their learning. It is said that a variety of lessons that contain many different kinds of tasks for learners produces motivation. This is something that I would like to investigate: in what way learners think that they learn the most. It would be one part of my principal research question, if different students benefit from different teaching and how that influences motivation.

2.2 Conscious and unconscious learning

Widdowson (1991) deals with the complexity and possible problems when learning a language. The aspect of the relationship between the role of the student and the role of the teacher is taken into consideration. It is also discussed what place grammar should have when learning English and how meaning is important for the learner. He also considers how the environment is an important element for motivation.

Widdowson (1991) discusses conscious and unconscious learning. He maintains that there is often a difference in teaching a language and in teaching about language. It is suggested that learning about a language or conscious learning is sometimes seen as something that stands in the way of learning and that has a non-motivating effect. Widdowson suggests that sometimes learning about the language can be inappropriate. One example of when this approach is inappropriate is when learners are too young to have developed analyzing skills. Widdowson thinks that learning about the language in some cases, can motivate learners to learn more. He thinks that this way of learning can help students to compare their second language to their first and gain knowledge from this. Widdowson also notes that if learners are aware of what they have learned they can compare this to other learning at school and it is not just limited to the subject English. He rejects the statement that a communicative approach doesn’t have anything to do with learning grammar. He states that the learner needs to know the rules of grammar but that is just one step towards the goal of using that knowledge to be able to communicate.
This is something that I want to investigate: Do learners see the conscious way of learning grammar as interesting or as non-motivational? Does the conscious way influence motivation and are there differences between learners?

2.3 The traditional way and the task based

Ruin (1996) distinguishes two different ways of teaching grammar by dividing them into the new and the old. The old perspective says that the teacher should give the already constructed knowledge about grammar to the learner. He or she should explain how different parts of grammar are to be understood and used. The new one suggests that the teacher and the learner work together to find knowledge. In this perspective exercises and tasks are important. The learner explores more than the teacher instructs.

Julkunen (2002: 29-41) also writes about tasks and explains what opportunities a teaching plan with tasks has. He writes that when people think and study language learning they often think of the motivation that comes from within the person. Julkunen (ibid.) notices that there has not been that much focus on the aspects of motivation where the learning takes place. He thinks that lessons should be a good opportunity to boost the student’s motivation and that learning can be entertaining and interesting. Julkunen refers to Gagne (1985: 307) who sees motivation from tasks as a large and important part of motivation. Then Julkunen refers to Maehr (1984) who points out that some tasks are better for motivating people than others. In order for a task to be motivational, the learner should not know the outcome. Julkunen provides some examples of what a task can be and some of them are that the teacher asks learners something in which learners have to find a solution to a problem or that they need to do something.

Widdowson (1991: 92-98) deals with the traditional way of teaching grammar. He says that this perspective often teaches grammar through looking at different parts of grammar taken out of its context. Words and sentences are treated as examples of the underlying structure of the parts of grammar that is studied. Through teaching grammar as different parts without showing how they work together to create meaning in language use Widdowson thinks that students will have problems to use the language. Widdowson thinks that learners need to see how
grammatical rules work together with words and their surroundings. If they know this they can create language and see the meaning of what they write or speak. The author suggests a teaching style that begins by dealing with words and how they are going to be changed in different settings and combinations. In this way the author maintains that learners get to know how to use language for communication. He recommends different tasks where the students have a problem to find answers to. In this way the learner has to deal with the different questions of grammatical rules, words and how to change them in different ways in different surroundings. By solving the problem they need to analyze the different components and become aware of grammar and how it can be used.

Ruin, Widdowson and Julkunen think that tasks are a good way for learners to develop. I want to investigate if learners see tasks, working to solve a problem as interesting and motivational when it comes to learning grammar.

2.4 Meaning and different kinds of motivation

Dörnyei and Schmidt (2002) discuss how important motivation is for second language acquisition. Questions that are raised are: What kinds of different motivation are there and how do these different types of motivation occur? What can the teacher do to have motivated students?

Mcgroarty (2002: 69-89) writes that motivation for L2 learning is created from people. She suggests that motivation also can come from the different surroundings and the environment of schools and the places where the teaching takes place. She also says that it can be good for the motivation of learning a second language to have different kinds of groups that work together. She suggests that it is important that learners see the things they learn as meaningful, that they have some level of choices and that it is something that they need to work for to master.

People that are driven by an inner motivation do things because they think that what they do is interesting, entertaining or challenging Deci & Ryan (1985). Those who are driven by inner motivation do things for their own self satisfaction. For these people learning is about learning something new and not about gaining some kind of reward Covington (2000). People that are driven by an outer motivation
are motivated by having a grade, recognition or other rewards. An outer motivation can be there because the individual wants to avoid some negative consequence.

The researchers of motivation, Ames & Archer (1988) mention the importance of that learning is taking place for the person’s own sake, that there is an inner motivation. The inner motivation is important to reach the best effect upon the learning of different situations. The researchers say that those who have inner motivation often uses more advanced ways of studying than those who have a motivation that comes from outer rewards such as grades.

This paragraph was about research of the importance of meaning and motivation. This I would like to investigate, how important meaning is for motivation. What kinds of different motivation are there and what seems to be learners major motivation is something I want to research.

2.5 How the student-teacher relationship influences motivation

Kozminsky and Kozminsky (2002) describe how important it is for teachers to have a dialogue with students. Feedback from teachers plays a big part when it comes to success or failure.

Mihalas, et al. (2009) write about the importance of good relations between teachers and students. They notice what the effects can be if the relations function in a good way and also the negative ones if the relations are poor. The authors say that the teacher’s relations to his or her students can influence whether the students will want to try to develop and learn more. Important factors for the quality of the relations between the student and the teacher are that the student can trust the teacher, respects him or her and that the communication goes well. There is not so much written about learners attitudes to their relationship to their teachers. This investigation hopes to add something to this discussion.
3 METHOD

This part is a description of the method I have chosen. The questionnaire that is my research instrument will be discussed and analyzed. I will describe my group of people that I made my research with and how I made my research. I am going to show how handed out my questionnaire and how I analyzed my data from my research and why I chose that way of dealing with my data.

3.1 Choice of method

I wanted to research different aspects of what influences learners’ motivation for learning English grammar. I wanted to have many students answering my questions so that I could see if there were any patterns. For this a quantitative method would suit my intentions because qualitative methods would just deal with a few learners. The amount of time was an important factor for how many I could include in this research.

I have chosen to investigate by using a questionnaire. I wanted to try to see some patterns in how and why learners think about grammar as they do and get the opinions of many people. Patel & Davidson (2003) write about the differences between quantitative and qualitative methods. They say that a quantitative method is about measuring the data collected that has statistic analyzing methods. Qualitative methods could be interviews and interpretative analyses.

3.2 Making the questionnaire

The authors deal with the question of standardisation and structure. That means how spontaneous the questions are and how open they are for the one who answers the questions. If there is a high degree of structure and standardisation it is important that there are questions enough for what you want to research. It is also important to see that the answers are relevant to what you want to measure. When you make a questionnaire with alternatives Patel and Davidson (2003) say that it is important to have a variety of answers so that the person answering doesn’t get stuck in a pattern of answers. The authors talk about different kinds of questions that can be used in questionnaires. They discuss how many possible answers there could be if there are
graded answers. They say that one way of excluding neutral answers is by having steps of four, six or eight answers and so on.

I tried to cover the different areas that I would like to research with questions and to have relevant answers. My questionnaire is mostly quite standardized and structured because I wanted to measure specific areas and see what students thought of them. There are some answers where they can have own suggestions. This was because I would like to give them the chance to express something that I in my background haven’t thought of.

3.3 The subjects of my investigation

When I was choosing who I would give my questionnaire to I thought about some different factors. It should be students who have experienced a lot of grammar in school. It was also important for me that it was students who were old enough to reflect upon their own learning and what they think of grammar. With these factors in mind I decided to give my questionnaire to students at upper secondary school. The two classes that I chose were at the end of their English B studies. This means that they have had English for several years and they have probably experienced a lot of grammar. It also means that these students are 17-18 years and there are good chances that they are able to analyze their learning and their experiences of grammar. The research was performed at an upper secondary school in the south of Sweden. I chose this school because I knew it from earlier; I knew some of the teachers and that the students there generally are serious about their studies.

3.4 The instrument - questionnaire

My questionnaire consists of six questions which are briefly discussed below

3.4.1 Question 1: During my time in school English grammar has been interesting: When?

This question concerns what activities learners think are the most interesting and motivational. It is connected to the work of Ruin(1996), Widdowson (1991) and Julkunen, (2002) who describe the traditional way of teaching grammar in which the
teacher does a lot of talking and explaining and the learners do mostly listen and learn rules. The authors compare this way of teaching to task-based teaching in which students and teachers work together to solve problems and tasks. Students must think on their own to find the answers to issues and problems. This question is a way of letting learners say if they prefer methods typical for the traditional way or if they like the task-based better. It is also connected to the importance of meaning for learning and the motivation from different groups. Mcgroarty, (2002) says that knowing what you learn is meaningful will have a motivational effect. The last thing that this question tries to measure is the importance of different groups for motivation. Mcgroarty (ibid.) talks about how having a way of working where students can work together in different groups can be good for their motivation. The response to this question helps to compare the motivational effect of different ways of teaching and learning, meaning/importance and motivation from groups.

3.4.2 Question 2: English grammar is important to…

This question intend to measure how learners value grammar, if they think it is important for some major events of life. Mcgroarty (ibid.) says that when learning something it is crucial that what is learned is seen as important for the individual. I think this is interesting, if you are a teacher and follow what Mcgroarty says you probably will spend some time with explaining why the things they learn are important. I want to know how students value grammar. I have listed some events of life and I want to find out how important they see grammar for taking part in these situations.

3.4.3 Question 3: Put an X to the left of the one that says how much you want to learn English grammar

This question measures how motivated the students are to learn grammar. Previous research that measures learner’s attitudes towards grammar has been carried out by Ruin (1996) and findings from this question can be compared to her research. Her research showed that there was a small percentage negative towards grammar. I want to see if the result would be the same in another setting with another target group.
3.4.4 **Question 4: How important is it that you have a good relationship with your teacher for you to learn grammar?**

This question leans on the research of Kozminsky and Kozminsky (2002) and Mihalas et al. (2009). They consider how important the relationship between student and teacher is for the motivation of learning. It is said that this relationship is very important and I want to find out if learners think that this is the case.

3.4.5 **Question 5: I learn grammar the best…**

This question deals with the way in which students learn grammar best. Widdowson (1991), Ruin (1996) and Mcgroarty, (2002) suggest that students are different and that it is important to teach with variety since they learn and find different things motivational. I want to see if there are any differences and if so what they are. Widdowson discusses the conscious and unconscious ways of learning. He mentions that the conscious way can be motivational but it has been seen as something that can be a problem when learning. This question has one alternative, an example of unconscious learning. A part of this question is how popular this alternative is compared to the examples of conscious learning.

3.4.6 **Question 6: I learn grammar because….**

This question is about what kind of motivation learners have for learning grammar. Are they motivated to learn grammar because they see it as meaningful or because of grades or is there an inner motivation? This question relates to the research on motivation by Deci & Ryan (1985), Covington (2000), Ames & Archer (1988) and Dörnyei & Smith (2002) as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.5 **Handing out the questionnaire**

Patel and Davidson describes the problem of unmotivated subjects of an investigation. They say it is important that you do what you can to make them motivated, give them reasons why the research is important and why you do it. It is also important to state why this individual’s answer is important. Another important aspect is to explain how the collected data will be used and the question of being
anonymous or not. I gave my questionnaire to 54 students divided into two classes. When talking to them before handing it out I stressed the importance of expressing their own honest opinions. I also informed them of that they were going to be completely anonymous, people who read my paper would not be able to see who answered what. I said who I was and why I where wanting them to fill in this questionnaire. After the first class had filled in the questionnaire I had some time before I would visit the second class. I looked through the questionnaires and saw that some people had answered in a way that I hadn’t planned for. This was true for three of my questions that had the design of a question with six following suggestions that they should put in order of numbers 1-6. Instead of giving each suggestion a number from 1-6, they gave two or more suggestions the same numbers. There were two number 3 and three number 1 and so on. When I gave my questionnaire to the second class I told them the same things as I told the first class. The difference was that I gave the second class more specific instructions on how to deal with the questions that some of the first class had misunderstood. Afterwards when I looked through the papers I saw that the problem was the same for the second class as for the first class. There were answers with same numbers.

3.6 Analyzing and choosing way of presenting data

Of the 54 responses only 36 were appropriate because of the above mentioned misunderstanding. The data was analyzed in the following way: Questions 1, 5 and 6 were questions where the students should put different suggestions into order by using numbers 1-6. To be able to show how popular the different suggestions were in comparison to each other I used diagrams which show clearly differences and similarities. Since the suggestions were put into order by numbers I decided to add the numbers of each suggestion to get a total number for each suggestion. The suggestion with the highest total number would be the most popular answer. When doing this I thought of one problem. The answer that should be the “most interesting”, “how students learn the best” or what they “agrees with the most” should according to the questionnaire be number one. When adding the numbers the most popular answer or suggestion would have the lowest number and would be shown as the lowest staples of a diagram. I wanted to have the most popular answers
as the highest staples so I decided to change the numbers. 1 becomes 6, 2 a 5, 3 a 4, 4-3, 5-2 and 6 becomes a 1. By doing this the most popular answers would be represented by the highest staples. When I had the total number for each suggestion I divided those numbers with the total score of all of the points there could be for all of the suggestions. By doing this I got how many percent of the total score each suggestion got. Then I put the numbers into diagrams.

Questions number 3 and 4 were questions where students should put an X at the suggestion that they agreed with the most. These two questions could also benefit from a diagram that would show how popular the different suggestions were. I counted how many crosses each question had and then divided those numbers with the total amount of participants (36). After doing that I knew how many percent each suggestion had. Now I could use these numbers to make a diagram.

Question number 2 had five different suggestions that should be rated on a scale of 1-4. With this question I didn’t want to look at a comparison of the different suggestions but how the answers were for all of the answers. I added the numbers each suggestion got and then I divided those numbers with the total number of participants (36) to get an average.
The most popular suggestion was the mix of teacher talking and exercises that had about 24% of the total points available. The least popular suggestion except the “own suggestions” was the teacher talking one that got about 15% of the total points.

This question was about the importance of English grammar. Students rated each suggestion with a number 1-4 depending on how important English grammar is for these suggestions. The numbers above are the average answers for each suggestion. All of the suggestions got a total score higher than 2. That implies that all of the suggestions are somehow seen as important. The two most important answers were “to get a good grade” and “have a job where you need to speak English”.

- Have a job where you need to speak English: 3.8
- Get a good grade in English: 3.7
- Watch and understand TV, a movie or theater: 2.5
- Make new friends: 2.3
- Travel: 2.9
This question showed that the students were generally positive towards learning English grammar. 85% answered that they were positive to learn English grammar.
Only 5% thought that the relationship between student and teacher didn’t matter for learning at all. About 46% answered that it was important.

All of the answers except “my own suggestion” had a quite high percentage similar to each other.
The most popular suggestion was the one of extrinsic motivation: “I want to get a good grade in English”. After this one came two examples of inner motivation: “It is important for me to know English grammar”
5 DISCUSSION

Here I will discuss the results from the questionnaire and the previous research. See the results part and the appendix for a view and a deeper understanding of the questionnaire.

5.1 What strategies do students see as the best for their motivation?

Here I will discuss a big part of my research, different strategies and how they influence motivation to learn.

5.1.1 The task based way vs. the traditional way.

Ruin (1996), Julkunen 2002) and Widdowson (1991) deal with the task based way of teaching and see this as a good way of motivating students. Ruin (1996) compares the task based way with the traditional way where the teacher talks more and presents facts that the students should embrace.

For this part of the research I used the question “During my time in school English grammar has been interesting when...” there were the alternatives of “working with friends” and “meaning” but these will be discussed in their one part of this discussion. There was also an alternative with their one alternatives but they didn’t have any. The alternatives I will compare are the three connected to task based teaching and traditional teaching.

The most popular answer of my question was the alternative that suggested a mix of teacher talking and exercises to do for the students. The strategies that came second and third after the mix-one were the alternatives of “doing exercises on their one” and the alternative of the teacher talking. The alternative that was mostly from the traditional way of teaching was the teacher talking alternative. This one wasn’t that popular, it could be implied by this research that the task based seem to be the most motivational for these students. The two alternatives that included exercises were more popular. However, the most popular alternative was about both teacher talking and exercises. If the students interpreted “teacher talking “ as explaining grammar then the most popular alternative was a mix of the traditional and the task
based. What could be implied is that students thought that the least motivational was when the teacher was talking without exercises connected to the talking.

5.2 What strategies do students see as the best for their learning?
Discussion about what strategies are best for students learning

5.2.1 The task based way vs. the traditional way, teaching with variety

Ruin (1996) discusses that students are different and benefit from different kind of teaching and ways of learning. Widdowson (1991) and Mcqroarty (2002) also discuss that students are different and benefit from different kind of teaching. Dörnyei & Smith writes that a teacher needs to have lesson plans with variety for that the students should be motivated.

If we look at the Figure 4.4 and how the students answered I think there are some points to be made according to the background research. The research suggests that students are different and benefit from different teaching. All of the suggestions (except “my own suggestion) had quite similar numbers. Some were more popular but every answer was quite popular. I think this implies that some students think that one way of learning grammar is interesting and other students think that some other ways are more interesting. For a teacher this research shows that variety of ways of teaching is important to keep all of the students interested.

Ruin (1996), Widdowson (1991) and Mcqroarty (2002) discuss both task-based teaching and the traditional way. It is implied that the task-based is seen as the best way. The results of Figure 4.4 were that the most popular answer was that the teacher is talking and students listen. That means that the most popular answer to how they learn grammar the best was one that is an example of traditional teaching. Working with exercises came on the second place but teacher talking was the most popular. The teacher talking alternative was a low-scorer at the question that measured what activities that are seen as the most motivational but when asking about learning it was a high-scoring answer. I expected that the most motivational also would be the answer that had the highest points on learning but that was not the case, why? The questions don’t have identical alternatives which makes the result harder to trust. But they are similar and teacher talking was scoring higher when it
comes to learning. This could be interesting to keep on investigating, how the relationship between motivation and learning is. It would be interesting to have identical alternatives for the questions, one about activities for learning and one about activities for motivation.

### 5.2.2 Conscious vs. the unconscious learning.

Widdowson (1991) thinks that learning about the language (conscious learning) can motivate learners to learn more. He also says that learning about a language or conscious learning sometimes are seen as something that stands in the way of learning and that has a non motivating effect.

When I researched how the students thought about this with conscious and unconscious learning I let them finish this sentence: “I learn grammar the best by...” I had four alternatives that were examples of conscious learning of grammar and one alternative that could be seen as unconscious learning. One alternative was their one suggestions but they didn’t have any. The example of unconscious learning was “By reading books and listening to people” This alternative was the third most popular out of the five suggestions. What can be said about this? As stated before, students are different and benefit from different strategies. This shows that some of the students like this way of unconscious learning but there are more popular ones that are represented by the conscious learning. Widdowson (1991) promoted the conscious way but said that there are times when it is not appropriate. From my results you could say that the conscious ways are good for learning but that students think that they learn from unconscious ways as well.

One interesting thing with this question is that the alternative “When the teacher explains different parts of grammar and I listen” was the most popular. In the previous question about what activities that make grammar interesting was the alternative with teacher talking the least popular of three strategies (1 teacher talking and exercises, 2 exercises and 3 teacher talking).

A conclusion of this could be that students do not think that the most interesting or motivational strategy doesn’t have to be the way they learn the most. Another way of seeing it could be that the questions are not created in a similar way so it is hard to
draw the previous conclusion. Students can interpret “talking” as something else than “explaining”.

5.3 What kind of motivation do learners have for grammar?

(Deci & Ryan, 1985) describes the inner motivation as something you do because you just want to, not because of a reward but from the lust of learning. (Covington, 2000) describes outer motivation as something you do because you want some kind of reward, like a grade. Ames and Archer (1988) stress the importance of the inner motivation; they say that this kind of motivation has the best effect upon learning something new. I let the students complete the following question: “I learn grammar because”… The most popular answer was: “I want to get a good grade in English”. This answer was one of three answers that can be seen as examples of outer motivation. Of course, grades matter a lot in school so maybe it is not that strange but still, the most popular answer was one of outer motivation. The second and third most popular answers were examples of inner motivation. Number two was “It is important for me to get a good grade in English” and number three: “I like to know about English grammar”. This could be an idea for further research, how to inspire inner motivation. The answer “Because I can work with friends” was the second last before “My own suggestion” but more popular than “I have to”. McGroarty (2002) writes about how letting students work in different groups can have a positive effect on their motivation to learn a second language.

In this research “working together with friends was a low scoring answer. There could be some different explanations. It could be that these students are not allowed to work in groups so that they don’t know if it is positive for their learning of grammar. A more probable explanation is that the other answers simply are more important for their motivation to learn grammar.

5.4 Are learners positive or negative towards grammar?

I wanted to research if students were positive or negative towards learning English grammar. The question I used was: “How much do you want to learn English grammar?” Ruin (1991) researched attitudes towards learning English grammar connected to writing. Her findings were that it was just a small percentage who were
negative towards learning grammar. From my research I can see that it was just five of 36 that answered “Not at all” or “Not that much” on the question how much do you want to learn English grammar? 31 answered “pretty much” or “I really want to learn”. Generally you can say that students were positive towards learning English grammar. Five out of 36 were negative towards learning grammar, what reasons could there be? By referring to answers students gave for other questions and previous research there could be some reasons. Maybe their way of learning wasn’t included that much into the teaching or maybe they had a bad relationship with their teacher or maybe they don’t see why grammar is important to learn. This could an area for further investigation, why students are not motivated for learning grammar. Ruin’s (1991) study was about grammar connected to writing and mine about grammar in general. Even if there are some differences there is a pattern that most of students seems to be motivated to learn English grammar.

5.5 How important is it for learners that what they study is meaningful for them?

Mcgroarty (2002) implies that if students see learning as meaningful and know why they learn they are likely to raise their level of motivation. I had one suggestion in question one which applied to when grammar has been interesting, the alternative was: “I know what I learn is important”. This alternative was the second most popular answer out of six. These students seem to think that knowing why they learn something is something that matters for their interest in learning grammar. The results of this questionnaire I think confirm previous research. Knowing why you learn something seems to be an important factor for motivation to learn, and in this case grammar. If this research is applied on teaching what consequences could there be? Students need to know why they learn something and see how it matters for them. I think it is one of the teacher’s tasks to include a discussion of why what he or she teaches is important.
5.6 How important is the teacher – student relation for motivation?

Mihalas et al. (2009) and Kozminsky and Kozminsky (2002) discuss the teacher-student relation. According to these authors the student-teacher relation is a factor that can motivate students to learn more. They also say that this relation could be a reason why students are not motivated. I wanted to see if students thought that their relation with their teacher was important for their motivation to learn English grammar. I asked them the question: “How important is it to have a good relation to your teacher for you to learn grammar.” Twenty-four students answered “Important” or “Very important”. Twelve students answered “Not important at all” or “A little important”. The majority thought that this relation is important or more for the learning process. That confirms what the previous research said but what about those 12 others? One theory could be that these students like to work and discover things on their own or together with their friends. This could be an area of further research, students who don’t think that this relationship is important. Why do they have this opinion and what does it mean for their learning?
In this paper, questions of motivation and learning grammar have been the major topics. I have analyzed previous findings of the area and been investigating what students at a Swedish upper secondary school think about motivation and grammar. To achieve my aims I used a questionnaire that measured learners’ opinions. Through my research I think that I have been adding some viewpoints to the questions I started this paper with. My research would be more reliable if there were more responses. Some of the opinions could have been more specific and clear. However through the responses I had I think there are some interesting patterns. The students who were a part of my investigation were generally positive towards grammar, thought that the teacher-student relationship mattered for learning and many had a grade as the major source of motivation. Ideas for further research could be to investigate why some of the students were negative towards grammar. It could also be interesting to see why some students thought that the student-teacher relationship did not matter for learning grammar. Another idea that could be interesting would be to see how teachers can work to inspire inner motivation for learning English grammar. According to my investigation students learn through different ways. One area for further investigation could be to what extent teachers think of this when they do their teaching. Students thought that teacher-talking time was a good way for them to learn grammar but not for making it interesting. This could be an interesting extension of my paper, to study if a way that is seen as interesting is a good way for learning as well.
REFERENCES


Appendix:

My Questionnaire

My definition of grammar: Wordclasses, grammatical rules (As an example: how verbs are used, and how you need to change words and your language).

1. During my time in school English grammar has been interesting when …
   (Put a number 1-6 to the left of the different alternatives. 1 is the most interesting and 6 the least interesting)
   - The teacher talks about grammar
   - I know what I learn is important
   - I can do exercises of grammar on my own
   - There is a mix of the teacher talking and exercises for me to do
   - I can work together with friends
   - My own suggestion is that:…………………………

2. English grammar is important to…..
   Make a circle around the answer you agree with the most.
   1= Not at all  2=A bit  3=Quite a lot  4=Yes, absolutely
   - Get a good grade in English
   - Watch and understand TV, a movie or theater
   - Travel
   - Make new friends
   - Have a job where you need to speak English

3. Put an X to the left of the one that says how much you want to learn English grammar:
   1= Not at all…
   2= Not that much
   3= Pretty much
   4= I really want to learn!

4. How important is it that you have a good relation to your teacher for you to learn grammar? Put a cross to the left of the one you agree with the most
   1= Not important at all
   2= A little important
   3= Important
   4= Very important

5. I learn grammar the best ….
(Put a number 1- 6 to the left of the different ways of learning. 1 is the way you learn best and 6 is the way you learn the least. If you don’t have a suggestion on your own put a 6 at that one.

When the teacher explains different parts of grammar and I listen
When I use a book or a computer trying to read and understand with help from a teacher
By reading books and listening to people.
By reading and talking about grammar with my classmates.
By doing different kinds of exercises.
My own suggestion is that: ..............................................

6. I learn grammar because….
(Put a number 1- 6 to the left of the different reasons for learning. 1 is the alternative you agree with most and 6 the least. If you don’t have a suggestion on your own put a 6 at that one.

I want to get a good grade in English
I like to know about English grammar
It is important for me to know English grammar
I have to
I can work together with friends
My own suggestion is that: ..............................................