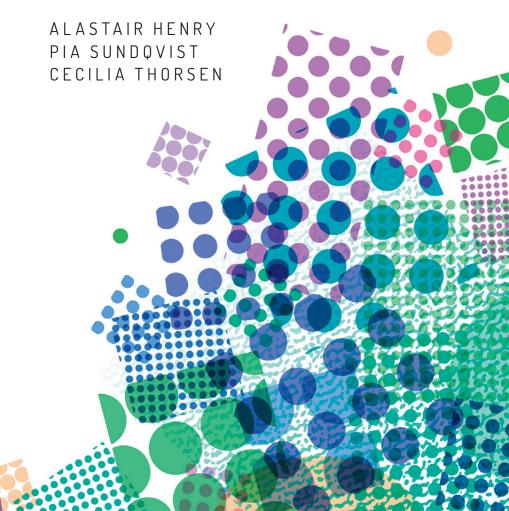
Motivational Practice

Insights from the Classroom



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CONTENTS

Authors 11

Introduction 13

ALASTAIR HENRY, PIA SUNDQVIST AND CECILIA THORSEN

Part | Setting the Scene

1 Young people and English 23

A changing landscape with changing challenges

ALASTAIR HENRY

More than a just lingua franca? 23

A changing landscape for English teaching 27

A fortunate subject? 33

The need for situated approaches in understanding learners'

motivation 36

References 39

2 Understanding language learners' motivation 43

ALASTAIR HENRY

Different from other types of motivation 43

Integrative motivation and Gardner's Socio Educational model 45

The L2 Motivational Self System 47

Flow 49

Directed motivational currents 52

Engagement 54 Willingness to Communicate 55 References 58

3 What Motivates Students? 63

ALASTAIR HENRY

Recapping on identities and challenges 63

Motivational strategies 65

Strategies with a focus on classroom activities 67

Not rock-solid golden rules 69

What works here? 71

Popular culture is motivational 73

Exploring national cultures may be more motivational

than intercultural experiences 74

Learning materials: Authenticity is crucial 76

Outputs increase investment 78

Creativity and identities are important 81

Classroom games may not be as motivational as activities involving

creativity and personal expression 82

Group working and mobile devices 82

References 83

Part II Learning from good practice

4 The MoTiSSE project 89

CECILIA THORSEN

Investigating motivational practice 89

Designing the project 90

Identifying successful motivators 91

Fieldwork 94

Sorting and analysing the data 98

Research products 99

References 102

5 Motivation and the importance of teacher-student relationships 105

ALASTAIR HENRY AND CECILIA THORSEN

A relational perspective on motivation 105

Teacher-student relationships, and emotional and social intelligence 107

The teachers in the MoTiSSE project 110

Successful motivators 111

The eighteen teachers 111

Motivational practice 113

Creating positive relationships 113

Creating security and self-confidence 115

Providing validation and being sensitive 116

Motivational activities take place in a relational context 119

Motivation and relationships 119

Teacher-student relationships and L2 motivation 122

The teacher 123

The activities 123

Connecting with students in the grade six class 124

Connecting with students in the grade nine class 125

How are these moments of contact motivational? 126

References 128

Part III Motivating Students

6 Motivational activities and identity work 133

ALASTAIR HENRY

Teacher challenges and student identities 133

Documenting the self 137

My profile 137

The book about me 139

A day in the life of me 144

Exploring connections 145

My family tree 146

My Roots 147

Imagining other worlds 149
Enacting life 151
Life after life 153
An encounter with prejudice 153
A Winter's Tale and A picture about life 154
Connections and identities 156
References 157

7 Motivation and funds of knowledge 161

ALASTAIR HENRY AND CECILIA THORSEN

English outside the classroom 161 Culturally responsive teaching 162

Principles for responsive teaching 163

Funds of knowledge deriving from students' social worlds 165

Perspective taking 166

Motivational activities 167

Popular culture as a builder of bridges 167

Creating films and TV-programs 175

Importing a digital game 181

References 184

8 The motivational affordances of ICT 187

PIA SUNDQVIST

Affordance theory and ICT 188 Successful grammar teaching at a rural school 189

The flipped classroom 190

The grammar lessons in focus 191

Two phases: grammar videos and digital tests 192

Teacher and student voices 194

And then there was the subjunctive 196

A teacher's conceptual change 198

Summing up some important conclusions 199

Digging into the world of literature 200

Networking with Harry Potter 201

Formative feedback videos with Holes 204

eTwinning for international networking 208

Playing digital games 210

Gaming, L2 English proficiency, and motivation 211

Gaming as good practice 213

Apps, websites, and social media 217

YouTube 217

Facebook 217

Readtheory 218

Kahoot 219

Glosor.eu 219

A purposeful use of mobile phones 220

References 221

9 Activities and creativity 227

PIA SUNDOVIST

The atmosphere of a school 228

No shoes, many blankets, and a thousand piece jigsaw puzzle 228

Wrapped up in a non-threatening English classroom 230

Mobile phones – not a problem 231

A foundation for creative work 232

The role of final artefacts for motivation 232

Audio and video recordings 233

Visual aids in oral presentations 238

Drama 241

Posters 242

Language play as a creative activity 243

References 245

10 Motivational project work 249

PIA SUNDQVIST

The problem: One size does not fit all 250

Directed motivational currents 251

Intensive group projects 252

The Music Project 253

The teacher's introduction of the project 254

The continuation of the Music Project and student voices 257

What are the IGP features of the Music Project? 261

Motivational affordances 261

The London Project 263

The purpose and introduction of the project 264

Motivational currents 267

Teacher and student voices about the London Project 271

What are the IGP features of the London Project? 274

Motivational affordances 274

The Health Project 276

Turbulent times during observations 277

Classrooms, ICT, and Facebook 277

The textbook trigger 279

Role-play instructions, output, and assessment 279

Role-play 1: Anorexia 281

Role-play 2: The sporty guy 281

What are the IGP features of the Health Project? 282

Motivational affordances 282

Returning to the problem 283

References 283

Part IV Challenges and opportunities

11 Challenges in bridging between cultures of English experience 289

ALASTAIR HENRY

Motivational affordances and challenges for teachers 290

Language awareness 292

Supporting students' agency: achieving a balance between structure and freedom 293

Positioning students in unwanted ways: 'redesigning' activities 296

Unwelcome intrusions into young people's private worlds 299

Missing the target: the importance of perspective taking 301

Identity and positioning 303

Maintaining integrity: Safety in self-disclosure 307

Project work, goal-setting and assessment 309

References 310

12 Critical Perspectives 315

ALASTAIR HENRY, PIA SUNDQVIST AND CECILIA THORSEN

Challenges 315

Reflecting on practice 317

Focus on Texts and Materials 318

Focus on Identities and Relationships 318

Focus on Agency and Creativity 319

Focus on Technology and Networking 319

Focus on Language Awareness 319

References 320

Author index 321

Subject Index 325

AUTHORS

Alastair Henry is Professor of Language Education at University West. His research involves the psychology of language learning and teaching, and he has focused in particular on motivation and learner and teacher identities. He is the co-editor, with Zoltán Dörnyei and Peter MacIntrye, of "Motivational Dynamics in Language Learning" (Multilingual Matters, 2015), and with Zoltán Dörnyei and Christine Muir, is the co-author of "Motivational Currents in Language Learning: Frameworks for Focused Interventions" (Routledge, 2016). He is a co-editor of "The Palgrave Macmillan Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning" (Palgrave MacMillan, 2019). His work has appeared in journals such as Applied Linguistics, Language Learning, The Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly and Journal of Teacher Education. He is the author of a number of textbooks for upper secondary English published in Sweden (Natur och Kultur) and in Denmark (Systime).

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Cecilia Thorsen is a Senior Lecturer in Education at University West. Her research has focused on educational attainment and assessment practices. Her work has appeared in British Journal of Educational Psychology, Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice, and Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research. With Alastair Henry she is the co-author of a number of articles on language learning motivation, and which have been published in journals such as The Modern Language Journal, Language Teaching Research, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, and International Journal of Multilingualism.

Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE)

The research upon which this book is based was carried out in the Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE) project, which was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) (Grant 2013-785). Data from interviews with teachers and students is provided in Swedish. English translations are available via the book's website: studentlitteratur.se/39568.

INTRODUCTION

ALASTAIR HENRY, PIA SUNDQVIST AND CECILIA THORSEN

Good scientists and good teachers have both learned to look. They have educated their awareness, so that they are attuned to phenomena that others don't see.

DIANE LARSEN-FREEMAN (2017, P. 435)

For researchers investigating social phenomena, one of the most commonlylevelled accusations is the failure to communicate results to the people who matter most, and for whom findings may have the most meaning. This criticism applies not just to theoretically-oriented fields within the social sciences. It pertains equally to more 'applied' fields of study, such as language learning psychology and language education, where an explicit aim is to generate knowledge that is directly meaningful to practitioners, and which can in some way improve the experiences of people who are learning a language. For some time now, it has been argued that one of the quality criteria upon which language learning research should be judged is the potential of findings to have a positive impact on educational problems (Ortega, 2005). Changes are slowly taking place. Taking second language (L2) motivation as an example, research is becoming increasingly problem-focused. As Ortega (2018) has recently remarked, L2 motivation is an area of applied linguistics where researchers have generally succeeded in translating empirical evidence into knowledge that can improve language learning and teaching. This may be because the study of L2 motivation represents "an attractive point of intersection between theory and practice in the psychology of language learning" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 90). While

motivation constructs can capture the interest of more theoretically minded researchers, empirical research has the potential to provide solutions of practical importance for teaching and learning in language classrooms. In addition to the now hundreds of articles and book chapters written on L2 motivation over the years, publications aimed more directly at practitioners have also been produced. Notable examples include books by well-known motivation researchers, such as Dörnyei's *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Hadfield and Dörnyei's *Motivating Learning* (Pearson, 2013), which contain ideas, strategies and advice emerging from extensive research undertakings. Equally, books by practitioners where research provides an underpinning for ideas that have been 'tried and tested' in language classrooms are also appearing, Thorner's *Motivational Teaching* (Oxford University Press, 2017) being a good example.

Bestselling books such as *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (Dörnyei, 2001) have made important contributions in translating theory and research findings into practical activities that can be carried out in classrooms, and insights that can guide teaching. However, because they are written for a broad international readership, teachers can sometimes come away feeling disappointed, in that the ideas, suggestions and strategies do not speak to *them* and relate to the realities under which *they* teach. Moreover, in these publications focus is often directed to a particular motivational theory or strategy, and less to the ways in which these ideas might play out in particular contexts of language teaching and learning.

Language teachers work in contexts of practice that are constrained by particular linguistic, cultural, societal and educational parameters. The unique nature of the local contexts in which teaching takes place means that the challenges facing teachers of English in developing a motivational practice need to be understood in relation to locally-pertaining conditions. These include, for example, the needs and interests of students in particular age groups, the varying experiences these students gain from engaging with English in activities outside school, the requirements of a particular curriculum, the policies and practices of the schools in which teaching takes place, and the expectations of students, students' parents and education colleagues. Inevitably, this means that the advice and ideas contained in

practitioner-oriented texts have to be molded, modelled and adapted to fit the particular conditions and realities of each individual classroom context.

Added to the challenge of having to adapt ideas about motivational teaching to fit local realities, in engaging with proposals for motivating students in ways that stretch beyond a 'one-off' implementation of a new idea, or the trying out of a particular activity, the teacher is faced with the challenge of having to piece together this advice in ways that can lead to the development of a motivational practice that is *sustainable* over time. Indeed, without collegial support in adapting, developing, trying out and evaluating innovations, and without opportunities to learn from the practice of teachers in similar educational contexts, and who face similar motivational challenges, it may be difficult for individual language teachers to develop a practice that is *systematically* motivational. It may be difficult to come to a point where a change in thinking about ways of motivating students can take place.

It was with these potential obstacles to the development of a motivational practice in mind that, in the Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE) project, we set out to investigate the practice of teachers who were successful in generating motivation. It is a similar recognition of the need to generate *situated* insights into motivational practice that has steered the writing of this book, and which can be summarized in four principles that have guided our work:

- Good teachers know far more about motivating students than the sum of knowledge that can be gained from research (Dörnyei, 2009).
 As researchers, our task is to offer conceptually-informed analyses of examples of motivational practice in particular classrooms, and to bring these insights to the attention of a wider community of practitioners.
- The global landscape of teaching English is becoming ever more diverse, meaning that it is "increasingly difficult to characterise the interactions among motivation, context and pedagogy in a generalized sense" (Ushioda, 2013, p. 235). Effective motivational practice needs therefore to be understood within the specific social and educational context in which the teaching and learning of English take place.

- Motivational practice and motivational activities are complex, and contain multiple affordances (Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2015).
 Insights into motivational influences are therefore best obtained when an activity or an aspect of practice is investigated with an awareness of complex interactions between teachers, students, texts and contexts.
- Developing a motivational practice involves teacher development in action (Kubanyiova, 2012). While the combination of providing examples of context-sensitive and effective practice together with theory-based interpretations can provide valuable insights that can influence the ways in which teaching is carried out, for more fundamental changes to take place, teachers need space for reflection, opportunities for collegial engagement, and the recognition of a need for change.

Who the book is for

At the point when we embarked on the MoTiSSE project, one of our most important discussions was about how we would present the results, and more specifically, how we could best bring the findings of our work to the attention of the people who matter most. Deciding on who these people were was not as easy as might perhaps be imagined. Not only is the MoTiSSE project rather unusual in L2 motivation research, in that it uses an ethnographic approach to investigate a psychological phenomenon, but in terms of the data gathered and the time spent on analyses, it is also one of the largest projects of its kind so far undertaken. In addition to articles published in scientific journals (which we hope will have impact within our particular research fields), we also wanted the knowledge that had been generated to have an impact within the local community of English language teachers in Sweden. While we recognize that many of the insights offered in the book will be of interest and relevance to teachers in other parts of the world, feeding-back to the same community of professionals whose practice we had studied was of primary importance. Choosing a Swedish publisher, and by including data in the original language in which it was generated (rather than translating it into English), our aim has been to deliver knowledge to the people who matter most – teachers of English in Swedish secondary schools – and in a

way that we hope is meaningful and valid *for them.*¹ Of course, we hope that the book will also be of value for secondary teachers in other contexts, for primary and upper secondary teachers in Sweden, and most importantly, in the education of preservice teachers. Indeed, because the book covers a wide array of motivationally relevant practices – ranging from teacher–student relationships and the classroom social climate, to culturally responsive teaching and online media production (Henry, 2019; Henry & Thorsen, 2018, 2019) – it can also be of value for any teacher who is interested in understanding how classroom practices can influence students' motivation.

What is in the book?

The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, the initial three chapters set the scene, starting off by mapping out the particular motivational challenges faced by teachers of English in Sweden (Chapter One). An overview of theories of L2 motivation with a particular focus on contextual and relational influences is provided in Chapter Two. Building on these two opening chapters, Chapter Three presents findings from a study examining the properties and characteristics of activities that secondary school teachers of English report as being motivational (Henry et al., 2018). Moving on, in the second section, we provide insights into the aims and methodology of the MoTiSSE project (Chapter Four), and a presentation of the participating teachers (Chapter Five). In this chapter, we also focus on these teachers' relational practices, and the motivationally important relationships that they had developed with their students.

It is in the third section of the book that we examine different aspects of the teachers' motivational practice. Specifically, we focus on varying types of activities that we had observed in their classrooms, and the motivational affordances associated with different types of activity. In Chapter Six the motivational value of activities that enable and encourage students to give expression to aspects of their identities not normally relevant, valued or invoked in classroom learning is addressed. Then, in Chapter Seven, the concept of 'culturally responsive teaching' (Warren, 2018) is examined. This

¹ English translations of quotations from the data can be accessed on the book's website at studentlitteratur.se.

chapter focuses on the ways in which activities that provide opportunities for students to orient to experiences gained outside of school, and which draw on funds of knowledge generated in interactions with popular culture and digitally-mediated communication, can be motivational.

In Chapter Eight attention shifts to the motivational affordances associated with the everyday use of digital technologies, while in Chapter Nine the focus is on activities that provide students with opportunities for creative expression. Finally in this section, Chapter Ten focuses on motivation that is generated in work with projects, and the various aspects of project-working that create interest and trigger engagement. In these three chapters, in-text questions are also included.

In the book's final section (Chapter Eleven and Chapter Twelve) a critical perspective is adopted. We identify the possibilities, and the demands on teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills, that are involved in developing the type of motivational practice described in the book's previous chapters. Resonating with our belief that the development of a sustainable motivational practice may best emerge through reflection and collegial discussion, in Chapter Twelve we invite readers to engage with some of the problem areas identified in the preceding chapters, and to consider opportunities for working in ways that more systematically take account of students' identities and perspectives in the design of learning opportunities and the creation of activities that have relevance, meaning and depth (Stevick, 1980, 1998). While these questions have been designed with language teachers' professional development and conceptual change in mind (Kubanyiova, 2012), the issues involved could usefully form topics for discussion in programs of English teacher education. Such discussions can be of particular value in connection with periods of practicum learning.

Words of gratitude

It would not be appropriate to begin this book without acknowledging the enormous debt of gratitude that we owe to the eighteen exceptional teachers who, with unswerving grace and generosity, allowed us to spend time in their classrooms. Imagine one day receiving an email from a person you might never have met before, asking if they can spend three weeks observing your work. Imagine further letting this person into your classroom, and watching

them from their position in one of the corners of the room furiously engaged with their laptop, recording everything that takes place, both the things that go well and those that go less well. Imagine too that these events – some that may be flattering but also some that might not – could find their way into texts spread to other language professionals not only in Sweden, but to other countries too. These are genuine concerns. For the teachers in the MoTiSSE project, not only were they brave in working in often innovative ways which acknowledged students' interests and identities, they also were brave in allowing this practice to be observed, and to be put on public display. For us, it was a privilege spending time in these classrooms, and we would like to acknowledge and to offer our heartfelt thanks to these eighteen courageous professionals: Charlotta, Elin, Emma, Ida, Ingrid, Jane, Lina, Linnéa, Lisa, Luna, Matilda, Molly, Noomi, Smilla, Siri, Therese, Victoria and Ylva.

Of course, it was not only these teachers to whom we are indebted. Their students also welcomed us into the midst of their learning, and their parents gave us permission to write about the motivational practice in these classrooms. To these hundreds of students, their parents, and the principals at the schools we visited, we offer our deepest gratitude. Inspiring teachers often have an impact on students' lives beyond the classroom, beyond the end of a school year, and beyond final achievement (Lamb & Wedell, 2015). Inspiring teachers can also inspire others to teach. One day maybe one of the students from one of these classrooms will hold this book in their hand, and perhaps gain an insight into the practice of the inspiring teacher who inspired them to become an English teacher too.

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19

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Motivational Practice

Insights from the Classroom

Motivational Practice provides a rich account of how teachers who are successful in motivating their students negotiate classroom relationships, and create engaging learning opportunities. It sheds light on how motivation emerges through teacher–student relationships, and in classroom activities.

Drawing on examples of motivational practice from the *Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English* (MoTiSSE) project, the book will help in-service and preservice teachers of English to develop perspective-taking skills that can enable them to teach in ways that students find meaningful, relevant and engaging.

This book offers a wonderful combination of a comprehensive survey of motivation theory and a rich collection of practical classroom activities – in short, everything you ever wanted to know about motivation! The accessible style and the reader-friendly structure is the icing on the cake. All in all, this is a very useful teacher's resource – highly recommended.

ZOLTÁN DÖRNYEI, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

This is a rare book, presenting examples of excellent English teaching from real school classrooms and discussing them with reference to the latest theories about learner motivation. Lärare i Engelska i Sverige, ni är lyckligt lottade!

MARTIN LAMB, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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