Motivational Factors and Obstacles in Written Homework

Motivationsfaktorer och svårigheter i skriftliga hemläxor.

Halina Miskevich

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Handledare: Sarah J. Gould
Examinator: Björn Sundmark
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate some motivational factors that enhance pupils’ written homework performance as well as the obstacles that make written homework a difficult task. The method applied in this thesis is qualitative. The investigation was carried out with the help of semi-structured interviews. The results of this study indicate that the pupils have different attitudes to their written homework. The most interesting result is that not all successful pupils are highly externally motivated. The research shows that external motivational factors can enhance the pupils’ written performance well enough but they can also lead to stress and anxiety and complicate the writing process for less successful pupils. Another finding of this dissertation is that deadlines related to assessment can be treated as a negative form of external motivation.

Key words: written homework, internal motivation, external motivation, the classroom motivational context, social context of writing, communicative goal of writing.
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1 Introduction

"I have all my thoughts in my mind but when I come to a word I can't spell it throws me off my writing."
(Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987)

1.1 Background

The main goal of this research is to focus on pupils’ written homework and to explore some motivational factors that enhance pupil’s written performance as well as the factors that can make it difficult for young people to cope with their written homework and submit it on time. More precisely, six pupils’ views on what motivates them to do their written homework in English and what they find difficult about it are researched.

The theme of the dissertation originates from my teaching period when I experienced a problem of having a small amount of written homework (assigned by me and their teacher) that pupils brought me on time. The teaching period showed that the pupils who had submitted their written homework even before the deadline are also representative. It became natural to explore some factors that influenced such a pattern by looking at pupils’ attitudes to written homework. It became interesting to explore the reasons why pupils at my partner school approached written homework differently.

The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that successful English homework doers are influenced more by external than internal motivation while less successful English homework doers lack one or other type of motivation, and, thus, achieve lower results.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the motivational factors that make some pupils participate actively in writing by producing texts and by submitting their homework on time as well as to study the obstacles that make some other pupils drop out of the writing process and to fail with their written homework as a result.
1.3 Questions

In short, the research questions of this investigation can be presented in the following way:

- What are the motivational factors that enhance pupils’ written homework performance?
- What kinds of motivation do the pupils employ when they write at home?
- What are the obstacles to written homework? Can some obstacles to written homework be related to negative motivational influences?
- To what extent are the pupils who are active in the classroom better in performing their written homework?
- What makes some pupils totally ignore their written homework?

Two major questions of this study investigate some motivational factors that enhance the pupils’ written performance as well as some obstacles that turn the coping with written homework into a difficult task.

In order to explore the motivational factors some earlier research on motivation has been considered. Two types of motivation have been taken into consideration as well. While studying the obstacles, several potential reasons have been identified from the beginning. These reasons have become a starting point in the research and served as a good basis for formulating interview questions.

An additional explorative question that this study touches upon considers the relationship between the classroom activity and the corresponding effort put into the homework performance.

An attempt to understand the pupils’ behavioral pattern has been done by answering the question whether the pupils who totally ignore submitting their written homework use the same pattern regarding other school subjects or whether they experience other difficulties that are linked to the specific role of the written task that should be done in English.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Syllabuses for English and the National Curriculum

The importance of writing is expressed in the Swedish school policy documents. In the syllabuses for English it is stated that writing is a very important ability that should be developed through compulsory and upper-secondary school.

In the National Curriculum for English at the compulsory school the goals to aim for in regard to writing are expressed in the following way. The school in its teaching of English should “aim to ensure that pupils develop their ability to use English to communicate in writing”. It should “develop their ability to actively take part in written communication, express their own thoughts in English, as well as understand the views and experiences of others”. It should “develop their ability to express themselves with variety and confidence in writing in order to relate, describe and explain, as well as give reasons for their views” (Lpo94).

In the National Curriculum for English at the upper-secondary school the goals to aim for in regard to writing are expressed further. The school should “refine their [students’] ability to express themselves in writing in different contexts, as well as develop their awareness of language and creativity” (Lpo94).

However, there is a lack of instructions when it comes to written homework in the present curriculum (Lpo94). The lack of instructions can be explained in several ways.

It can be partially explained by the main purpose of homework. In the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary the word “homework” is defined as “work that is given by teachers for students to do at home”. It can be used as “en avgränsad skoluppgift för hemarbete” (Nationalencyklopedin, 2006) or as a supplementary task given for educational or even entertaining purposes.

Primarily the lack of instructions can be explained by the fact that the teacher is given a great deal of freedom in how she/he goes about helping pupils achieve the goals that are expressed in the National Curriculum. As a result, the amount of written homework
varies from school to school as there are no strict methodological rules about how much pupils have to write outside the classroom.

In regard to my research (class) it is worth mentioning the number of hours the pupils have for learning English. This number varies but on average the pupils have 120 minutes of English per week and 40 minutes per week are dedicated to all homework (läxläsning).

Many teachers consider written homework to be a good source of checking pupils’ written knowledge of the language and a reliable means of developing pupils’ writing skills. This can be accepted due to the wide content of written homework that makes it possible to develop writing abilities at different stages and of different genres, as it starts from the mechanical re-writing of some given information and progresses to a more advanced type of composing a text that can be a description or a horror story, an explanation of something important or an amusing letter.

2.2 Motivation in Written Homework

While considering motivation in second language acquisition it is important to highlight the definition of motivation made by Lightbown and Spada (2004). They define motivation in terms of two factors: “learners’ communicative needs and their attitudes towards the second language community” (56). These two factors are said to enhance pupils’ performance in acquiring a new language. In regard to writing it can be interpreted in the following way. On the one hand, if pupils need to transmit their thoughts with the help of the language they will be motivated to compose a written text. On the other hand, if pupils understand the importance of learning English as a language of worldwide communication they will try to improve their written knowledge of the language. This is how the pupils become aware “of the different purposes of written communication and the different ways information is organized in written texts” (Richards and Renandya, 2002, 304).

Two types of motivation should be defined in this connection, namely external motivation and internal motivation. External or extrinsic motivation is usually defined as the type of motivation that comes from outside the person. Higher grades or appraisal, for
example, can function as some external motivational factors in some cases. Internal or intrinsic motivation is usually defined as the type of motivation that comes from (within) the person. For example, the desire to learn as much as possible can function as an internal motivational factor. Very often, the boundary between external motivation and internal motivation is blurred. That is why it is difficult to make a clear distinction between these two types of motivation in the case when a learner studies a lot in order to enter the desired university programme.

However, the problem of distinguishing between two types of motivation in practice can be complicated by another fact, namely, that there is no consistent definition of the terms in contemporary research. Still, as these terms are crucial to the findings of the present study, it seems reasonable to expand on the definitions in a more specific way to trace the most important characteristics of both types of motivation.

Deci and Ryan (2000) state that “intrinsic motivation remains an important construct, reflecting the natural human propensity to learn and assimilate” (54). They prefer to define internal motivation with the help of another term “intrinsic orientations” (54) that refer to such reasons of L2 learning as inherent pleasure and interest in the activity. The internal or intrinsic motivation is viewed by Dornyei and Schmidt (2005) as “enjoyment of language learning” (318) and is considered to be an important item in the so-called “value factor” (347) that is one of the main components of motivation. They also view internal or intrinsic motivation as a variable that comprises an affective or integrative dimension that is “a general core of the L2 motivation” (400). It is defined by the researchers as the type of motivation that is driven by integrative factors, and that is why, it can be called “integrative motivation” in some cases (13).

The term “integrativeness” (Dornyei and Schmidt, 2005, 5) should be explained in a more detailed way. First of all, it means “a genuine interest in learning the second language” (5) to come closer to the other language community or to integrate within both communities. Secondly, it refers to the understanding of motivation from the socio-educational perspective on second-language acquisition. According to this approach, motivation is viewed as comprising the following “three elements: effort, desire and affect” (6). Each element is said to be equally important. In regard to written homework,
motivation should be reflected, then, by the combination of effort put on homework plus the desire to do it and the ability to see positive outcomes.

External motivation is defined by Noels (2002) through the term of “extrinsic orientations” (43) that refer to extrinsic reasons apart from inherent interest in the activity, for example, when the pupil’s behaviour is influenced by some external source. Noels (2002) uses another term to describe the same behaviour. He applies the term “extrinsic regulation” (46) to describe the pupil’s desire to attain a reward like a better course credit. Some of these external factors, such as financial benefits or the desire to get a better job in the future, comprise “the instrumental or pragmatic dimension of the L2 motivation” (Dornyei and Schmidt, 2005, 400).

This dissertation aims to explore some motivational factors and obstacles in the written homework. Different effects of both internal and external motivation on pupils’ written performance will be analysed. The previous research on motivation will be taken into consideration. Internal motivation will be interpreted in this dissertation as the desire to learn and take interest in the task, as well as enjoyment of language learning. External motivation will be interpreted as external sources in the form of marks and pragmatic benefits in the future career.

It is important to emphasize the fact that external motivation can enhance the pupils’ performance well enough. The previous study on extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors for learning English in the classroom showed that for six successful pupils, extrinsic motivational factors were dominant (Bergdahl and Thörn, 2006). According to the authors, the grades functioned as “an incentive [reason] to their [the pupils’] motivation for learning English” (Bergdahl and Thörn, 2006, 31). This aspect was taken into consideration during the process of working out the main hypothesis of the present dissertation. At the same time, the authors expressed their doubt about whether the grades were the actual reasons why successful pupils were motivated to learn English. The researchers suggested teaching pupils “to look beyond the grades” (37) in order to make them see the actual need that they have for acquiring L2 language and implicated the importance of the classroom motivational context. The research did not emphasize any
possible negative outcomes of the external motivational influence. This dissertation may research the area in a more detailed way.

The classroom motivational context has been recently emphasized by the research made by Kelly (2007) on the relationship between student participation in classroom discourse, and student effort on classroom and homework assignments. The research indicated that out of the classroom motivational context, many underachieving pupils may find themselves in a troublesome situation, and it can make it difficult for them to cope with their written homework.

The importance of a motivating classroom climate while considering learning achievement from a longer-term perspective has been stressed by Dornyei (2007). He claims in his research on motivation that “the long-term, sustained learning—such as the acquisition of an L2—cannot take place unless the educational context provides, in addition to cognitively adequate instructional practices, sufficient inspiration and enjoyment to build up continuing motivation in the learners” (719). In order to create a motivating classroom climate he suggests three phases, namely generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation (727).

The first phase, according to Dornyei (2007) should include three language-related values: intrinsic value, integrative value and instrumental value. The definitions of these values go parallel to what was stated about different kinds of motivation previously. For example, to enhance intrinsic value the teacher should promote interest in the task so that the pupils can feel enjoyment of language learning. Similarly, in order to enhance integrative value, the teacher should promote the cultural background of the target language. And to enhance instrumental value the teacher should talk about pragmatic benefits of the L2 learning.

The second phase should include five self-motivating learner-strategies:

- commitment control strategies
For example, if the pupil remembers positive rewards like a good mark or the teacher’s appraisal then it will be easier for her/him to keep and even increase the original goal commitment.

- **metacognitive control strategies**

For instance, if the pupil is aware of different ways of dealing with an activity it will help her/him to control concentration at each step in order to fulfill the task in a proper way.

- **satiation control strategies**

This strategy is related to gaining more interest in the task. This can be achieved by developing the pupil’s imagination or by promoting the importance of having different ideas that are relevant to the task. This is important for those pupils who feel bored when they complete, for example, their written homework.

- **emotion control strategies**

This strategy is dedicated to the ability of the pupil to manage negative emotions and to promote the positive ones. For example, the teacher can promote self-encouragement techniques, so even if the pupils fail they would be able to believe in their success next time.

- **environmental control strategies**

The last strategy is directed towards eliminating negative environmental distractions that disturb some pupils in a various degree. For example, if there is the pupil who is very disturbed by people talking all the time in the classroom or by a computer at home he or she would, first of all, become aware of this. Secondly, the pupil should be provided with a piece of advice how to deal with it.

The importance of these strategies in regard to L2 learning and motivation can be regarded of extra value “due to the longlasting nature of the process [and because] L2 learners need to maintain their commitment and effort over a long period, often in the face of adversity” (Dornyei, 2007, 728).

The third phase in the long process of creating a motivating classroom environment is dedicated to encouraging positive-retrospective self-evaluation where the teacher’s
motivational feedback helps the pupil to develop self-confidence. It is said to be important that motivational feedback should be not only informative but constructive.

Such an understanding of the problem places the research into a frame of a learner-centered approach. In regard to written homework, this approach can be viewed as the central one as it focuses on each student’s needs and learning strategies though it presupposes a good amount of individual planning from the teacher.

2.3 Obstacles in Written Homework

Writing is said to be a difficult ability to develop. In Richards and Renandya’s work (2002) writing complexity in schools is emphasized. Writing is considered to be “the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master” (303). The researchers claim that it can be connected with the difficulties for children to cope with the processing demands of coordinating ideas in writing and translating these ideas into a readable text. These difficulties are experienced by many schoolchildren. However, there are some other difficulties that face pupils of different ages while writing.

Obviously, writing becomes more complicated when a written text has to be composed within a limited period of time and submitted for the deadline. Time influences the students’ homework performance in general, showing some students as disciplined learners who are aware of study techniques and strategies, and bringing some other students into stress and anxiety. Time pressure anxiety (deadlines) and viewing homework as a dull formal task often function as obstacles. In regard to English, some other variables that may affect students’ written homework should be taken into consideration as well.

The inability of some pupils to demonstrate their skills independently can be considered a major obstacle in coping with written homework: some pupils often complain that they can not choose a theme to write about, or do not know where to seek information, or how to interpret the text in their textbook. In this connection, it is useful to refer to Vygotsky
(1978) who worked out the concept of the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky suggests that those skills within the zone that can be executed by the learner independently, should be executed by the learner himself. However, those skills that cannot be executed independently can be performed with the help of the teacher.

Some other researchers suggest similar ways of dealing with difficulties that pupils have while writing. Marzano and Paynter (1994) worked out a model of the writing instruction that showed how writing could be taught and reinforced. This model combines skills and the whole-language approaches to produce a new written instruction where “a skilled teacher …interact[s] with pupils while they are writing in such a way as to help them develop those skills that they cannot perform independently” (p.23).

In regard to written homework, these findings can be interpreted in the following way. If some pupils experience difficulties in writing at home it is probably worth organizing their work in such a way that some parts of their written homework can be done in the classroom with the help of the teacher.

The importance of the social context of written homework should be taken into consideration by teachers, as well. Kaplan and Grabe (1996) pay a special attention to the issue of social context of writing. They believe that social contexts and attitudes can make a big impact on the development of writing ability. By social contexts they mean the classroom social context that includes not only the interactions among the teacher and the pupils in the classroom but also the larger world outside school. For example, it is important to know what “interests and experiences children have outside of school” (105), who the writer is, his or her characteristics, whether we deal with the “immigrant pupil” and so on. The researchers are convinced that “the social contexts and attitudes [of the pupils towards the L2 learning] …influence the writing and the writer” (34). Moreover, they believe that “only the social context of language usage does have a meaning potential for the learner and only in such a context …it is easy to learn” (104). The authors imply that the teachers should know the specificity of the social contexts their pupils are placed into while coping with their tasks. The teachers should also know
what attitudes the pupils have to the tasks they have to do and what influences them to have this or that point of view on the subject-matter.

In regard to written homework, it seems reasonable to suggest that not knowing these aspects can prevent many teachers from dealing professionally with numerous obstacles that the pupils face in their written homework assignments.

3 Method

3.1 The Qualitative Interviews

3.1.1 Selection and Participants

The investigation was carried out at a small secondary school situated in the south of Sweden. The participants were chosen from form 8. The class consisted of 23 pupils: 9 girls and 14 boys. The average age of my students was 13.9.

The participants for the qualitative interviews were chosen using several criteria, but, first of all, they were chosen from the pupils who were willing to participate. Secondly, my own knowledge of them and their teacher’s suggestions influenced my choice. Thirdly, the participants were chosen according to the frequency they coped with their written homework. Three major groups or types could be identified from the beginning. Consequently, six pupils were chosen for qualitative interviews, so that each group was represented by two participants. The following types of pupils could be found. Here, they are presented with their fictional names:

Type 1 or Pair 1: Successful English homework doers:

- the term “successful” refers here to the pupils who cope with their written homework even before the deadline.

This type is presented by the following pair of pupils:
Lena and Björn

*Type 2 or Pair 2: Less successful English homework doers:*

- the term “less successful” refers here to the pupils who need some extra time because they experience difficulties in coping with their written homework, and as a result they submit it after the deadline.

This type is presented by the following pair of pupils:

Inga and Anna – two less successful pupils who sometimes do not know how to cope with the difficulties they face in their written homework.

*Type 3 or Pair 3: The least successful English homework doers:*

- the term “the least successful” refers here to the pupils who do not submit their written homework even after the deadline.

This type is presented by the following pair of pupils:

Åsa and Sasha – two pupils who sometimes do not submit their written homework at all. They also tend to achieve somewhat lower results, in general, in comparison to their classmates.

### 3.1.2 Some General Observations

Some general observations of the class, concerning how well pupils worked in the classroom during a sequence of English lessons, should be included. It is worth mentioning the fact that my expectations of the class were very high. They were based on a very good working atmosphere in the form 8 where I taught a lot. There were many active students in the classroom who raised their hands all the time. It was possible to vary assignments and use lyrics, songs, my voice as a storyteller, gestures, mimics,
additional information from various sources. These pupils (like Lena and Björn) were open to participate in dialogic discussions.

Dornyei and Malderez state that “some classes feel good and some bad” (Group dynamics and foreign language teaching, 1997, 65). My research class felt good because of a collaborative atmosphere during a sequence of English lessons. At the same time, there were some students who did not participate much in the classroom activities. Some of them like Åsa and Sasha were sitting quietly as if they had been shy about saying anything in English.

3.1.3 The Type and the Goals of Qualitative Interviews

The investigation was carried out with the help of qualitative interviews. Semi-structured interviews were employed.

Semi-structured interviews, according to Johansson and Svedner (2006), are characterized by a balanced amount of flexibility and structure, achieved by a combination of open-ended questions and guided questions. For this study, semi-structured interviews are preferable, in comparison to informal interviews that contain questions on the spot, as well as standardized interviews that contain structured questions asked in the same order and with the same words for all the participants. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they lower the risk of freezing moments in a conversation, as well as having a good amount of guidelines preventing the conversation from going far beyond the actual theme.

The goals of this type of qualitative interviews were to bring in various viewpoints to the scene, to find out what the students thought about their written homework and to explore what motivated them when they worked at home and what made their written homework difficult.

All interviews were conducted in Swedish to enable all interviewees to express themselves freely. The participants got to know that their names would be kept
anonymous. The participants submitted their parents’ consent for the participation in the interviews. This was made according to what is stated by Johansson and Svedner (2006) in regard to the ethical considerations in any research. “The participants must not be led behind the light in regard to the goals of the investigation…” (my translation, p.29). The participants were informed about the aim and the method of the research. The participants’ questions were answered and they were informed about the possibility to terminate their participation in the interview without any negative consequences.

The participants were not informed about the types or the categories they belonged to, as such “labeling” of pupils could be harmful for them as individuals. For example, it could prevent less successful pupils from further development.

3.1.4 Equipment

I did not use a tape recorder while interviewing my students. Instead, I noted down the information and structured the interview in such a way that I was able to repeat what had been said. And then I developed information at the next stage. This gave me enough time to write down the information. I tried to build the next question from the information I had received and developed the conversation further in this way.

3.1.5 Procedure

The interviews were conducted individually. It seemed reasonable to interview six pupils to get their views on what motivated them to do their homework and what they considered difficult about it. Six interviews with the students were arranged in a small separate room. Each interview took between 40-60 minutes to complete. A special interview guide had been thoroughly worked out (available in the appendices). However, the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner that resembled a simple talk between the researcher and the interviewed. The interview guide helped to hold the conversation in a lively manner.
3.1.6 Validity and reliability

In terms of validity, the study can be treated as possessing its own internal validity because the research measures what it is supposed to measure. In terms of external validity, the generalizations to other people and settings can hardly be done. The results of this study are contextual to a very high extent.

The research can be treated as reliable because the results can be replicated showing the pattern that includes successful, less successful and under achieving learners who are influenced by different motivational factors in their written homework and learners who cope or do not cope with their written homework.
4 Results and Analysis

This section covers five major categories. Each category presents the collected material from the interviews. The first one aims to present the interviewed pupils in four categories: learners with high external motivation, learners with high internal motivation, learners with low external motivation, and learners with low internal motivation. The second category deals with some other factors that enhance pupils’ written homework performance. Factors that make written homework a difficult task are presented under category three. The fourth category deals with positive and negative impacts of external motivation. The last category deals with positive and negative impacts of internal motivation.

4.1 Four Categories of Learners

In the methodological section three types of pupils have been distinguished, namely successful English homework doers (Lena and Björn), less successful English homework doers (Inga and Anna) and the least successful English homework doers (Sasha and Åsa). This is reflected in the table 1 below. According to the findings of this research, the pupils in their way of acquiring English are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. For all six pupils both kinds of motivation play an important role. At the same time, there are some pupils who are more internally motivated, like Lena and Anna. Some pupils are more externally motivated, like Sasha, Åsa and Inga.

Table 1 below helps to see similarities and differences between the pupils in each type as well as among three types. The left column of Table 1 represents high or low level of internal or external motivation according to which all six pupils can be categorized as learners with high external motivation (category I), learners with high internal motivation (category II), learners with low external motivation (category III) or learners with low internal motivation (category IV).
In short, the results can be presented in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>type 1</th>
<th>type 2</th>
<th>type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lena</td>
<td>Björn</td>
<td>Inga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External high</td>
<td>Category I</td>
<td>Category I</td>
<td>Category I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal high</td>
<td>Category II</td>
<td>Category II</td>
<td>Category II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External low</td>
<td>Category III</td>
<td>Category III</td>
<td>Category III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal low</td>
<td>Category IV</td>
<td>Category IV</td>
<td>Category IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1:** Four categories of learners

- **Type 1:** Björn is influenced by extrinsic and intrinsic motivation equally. Lena is influenced by extrinsic motivation slightly, intrinsic motivation dominates.

- **Type 2:** Inga is influenced by extrinsic motivation to a very great extent, intrinsic motivation is low. Anna is influenced by intrinsic motivation to a very great extent, extrinsic motivation is low.

- **Type 3:** Sasha is influenced by extrinsic motivation to a high extent, intrinsic motivation is low. For Åsa extrinsic motivation dominates, intrinsic motivation is low.
4.1.1 Category I Learners with High External Motivation

Björn, one of the successful English homework doers, admits the fact that marks play a very important role for him. He can be described as a diligent pupil who always performs his school tasks. He sits at the first desk in the classroom. He is active and polite, intelligent and reads a lot. He understands the importance of marks. The question: “What motivates you to write?” brings the following answer immediately “I want to get good marks”. Having thought a little bit more, he adds “and I want to learn different things, too”. This aspect characterizes him as a pupil not only with high external but also with high internal motivation.

For Inga, a less successful English homework doer, marks play a very big role, too. Inga can be described as an active pupil who is eager to learn English. At the same time, she does not want to do extra work, for example, she does not want to get written homework more often because she stresses too much about marks. Inga says “I have to hand [written homework] in, otherwise I won’t pass. It can be extra stressful because of marks”. Inga’s example shows that assessment brings with it stress and anxiety. That is why we may conclude that external motivation can have a negative psychological impact in some cases. This aspect will be discussed more thoroughly further on in this section.

Åsa and Sasha, the two under achieving pupils, are also influenced by external motivation to a very high extent. Åsa can be portrayed as a shy pupil. She sits at the front desk in the middle of the classroom. She almost never raises her hand. She answers the teacher’s questions unwillingly. At the same time she can take participation in some classroom activities, for instance, sitting in a discussion circle with interest. Åsa does not know what motivation means. She says “I don’t need to be motivated. I can do it, anyway”. But she is convinced that marks and the teacher’s impression of her contribute a lot to her desire to “make it better” next time. She says ”I don’t want to get bad marks” and “ [the teacher’s impression of her] means a lot because if [teachers] say that you can not do this in a proper way you try to do it better” next time. This result is interesting because it reveals a discrepancy that exists in her answers. On the one hand, Åsa is unaware of what motivation is. On the other hand, she is able to enumerate two relevant
aspects of external motivation. The latter aspect implies that it can be useful to explain the concept of motivation for under achieving pupils so that they can become better at developing their own study techniques while acquiring the English language.

Sasha wants to get “good marks” because he wants to be “good at school”. He wants to be “good” because he also wants to get praise from his parents and his teacher. In order to describe Sasha it is relevant to state that he is an immigrant pupil who struggles with his English and Swedish. It is difficult for him to write in both languages. Very often he needs to work double as much as his classmates because he needs to translate unknown words from his mother tongue into Swedish and only then into English. It is also interesting to notice that he wants to be as good as his classmates, but he wants to show his personality too. He sits at the very back of the classroom near the window. He is the pupil who is heard a lot. He has a loud voice and he talks a lot during the lessons. Sometimes, the teacher has to calm him down by giving critical remarks about the way he behaves himself in the classroom.

### 4.1.2 Category II Learners with High Internal Motivation

As Lena, another successful English homework doer, states it, “it depends greatly on what mood I am at the moment” and continues “if I am glad I am able to cope with almost everything, but if I am tired almost nothing goes right”. Lena is a very diligent person who is very serious about all school tasks. She is responsible and helpful. She helps her classmates with explanations of, for example, what should be written at home. She is very quick too. It happens quite rare when she experiences difficulties in her written homework. Sometimes, she feels exhausted because she spends so much energy on different activities both in school and outside the school.

Although Björn states in the beginning: “I want to get good marks”, he also says, “but I want to learn different things, too. I want to write better” when it comes to ”grammar” and “spelling”. Björn explains what motivation means in his own way. He says, “Motivation is how one is motivated to do something, for example, homework, and so on. In other words, how one thinks and what makes one motivated to do so well as possible.
One can be poorly motivated and then, probably, it won’t be so easy. Therefore, motivation is important”.

Anna, a less successful pupil, has a desire to learn more. She says, “I want to learn more things” and “I need to be motivated to cope with [written homework], otherwise, it will be more difficult”. She stresses the importance of internal motivation. She is the pupil who writes quite often for herself outside the classroom. She writes in English because she likes the language itself. She also perceives writing in English as a good means of expressing her thoughts in the written form. She does not like to write for marks as she thinks it can be less motivating. Anna is not the pupil who talks a lot. One of her teacher’s comments on her was that she should participate more actively in the classroom activities. This is also interesting because Anna is the only pupil (out of six) who writes in English outside the classroom. This aspect is interesting as it raises another question: Can it be so that some pupils who are less active/shy in the classroom are better at expressing themselves in writing?

4.1.3 Category III Learners with Low External Motivation

Interestingly enough, Lena, a successful English homework doer, states that marks play some role for her but not the most important role. She explains it by saying, “of course, this is natural that one has it in mind during work”, but she admits the fact that marks “slightly” affect her. This can be due to the fact that Lena is motivated by having a lot of ideas. In other words, marks can not function as a stimulating factor that helps her to write. She needs inspiration in order to cope with her written homework.

Anna, a less successful pupil, states that she does her homework because “[teachers] say” she should do it. As it was mentioned above, if Anna is not internally motivated it becomes more complicated for her to complete her homework. Although she states “marks play a very important role for me”, she is not motivated by them. She is more motivated by her brother’s suggestions (she sometimes asks him for a piece of advice). She can also become more inspired by her written product itself. She can be inspired by
the process of writing itself. She says, “It is interesting when I write my own text myself. It is exciting because I learn a lot”.

4.1.4 Category IV Learners with Low Internal Motivation

For Sasha, a low-achieving pupil, the internal interest in any task is extremely important. Sasha understands the word motivation as “interest to do things”. He is convinced that in order to achieve the goals he needs to get interested in what he is doing. Even when he states, “I want to be good at school and I want to get good marks”, he admits that he has ”no interest” in doing his homework. The absence of interest results often in Sasha's failures because he does not participate in activities in the same way as his classmates. The most interesting aspect is that Sasha is aware of the lack of interest because he states about it himself. He understands that in order to become more successful he needs to be more internally motivated. This knowledge is useful to keep because the teacher’s task then is not about making Sasha conscious about his problem but about taking concrete steps in order to make Sasha more successful in his written homework, and, probably, more successful in his way of acquiring of the English language too.

Inga, a less successful English homework doer, performs her written homework because it is there. She states she needs to be motivated “a little bit” to cope with her written homework but the most important factor that enhances her written performance are marks. She states herself that she does “not write in English for other purposes”.

The obtained results can be related to the theoretical background that was described in the introduction. The result that touches upon the impact of the external motivation correlates to some extent but not totally with the results described by Bergdahl and Thörn (2006). Two successful pupils in this research (Lena and Björn) stated clearly that they were affected to various degrees by some extrinsic motivational factors, such as marks or the teacher’s appraisal. However, Lena’s result was interesting and deviated from the results obtained in the previous research. Being a successful pupil, she stressed the importance of her internal state for coping with the task rather than the importance of marks. Björn’s result was interesting, too, because he stressed the importance of learning, as well as the
importance of marks. The result indicates that even if Lena and Björn belong to a “successful” type of pupils they have different attitudes to homework and different ways of dealing with it. In other words, the findings of this research indicate that for the pupils in Type 1, “Successful English homework doers”, extrinsic motivation does not always dominate. There are different factors that enhance successful pupils’ written homework performance. There are different factors that make their written homework hard. Lena is more internally motivated, while Björn is affected equally by both the internal and the external motivation.

As far as the second pair of pupils is considered (Inga and Anna), it is also difficult to generalize and state that the pupils within Type 2, “Less successful English homework doers”, are affected more by, for example, extrinsic motivation. The results show that Inga pays more attention to marks, while Anna needs to be more internally motivated to cope with her written homework successfully. The results also indicate that it is not right to state that less successful pupils totally lack one or another type of motivation.

The third pair of the pupils placed within Type 3, “The least successful English homework doers”, is characterized by quite a high level of extrinsic motivation and a low level of internal motivation. However, in regard to an under achieving pupil, Sasha, who often does not submit his homework at all, we see that the external motivation can not function as a facilitating factor, as he lacks the most important driving energy, e.g. the interest in written homework. Sasha admits that he has the same attitude regarding other school subjects, too. Åsa who does not bring her homework occasionally motivates it by saying that she forgot it at home or that she did not know about it, or for some other reason. In this case, it is not so easy to find out what difficulties Åsa experiences because she does not state clearly what problems she has, in comparison to Sasha. I can only suppose that the reason can be the same, the lack of interest. And that explains why she is defined in this research as a pupil with a low level of internal motivation.

At the same time, Åsa is the pupil who is very much affected by the teacher’s appraisal and marks. So, probably, some other people can explain the difficulties she experiences
in a different way. They can venture an argument that the difficulties can be related to some possible concentration problems or other reasons of a similar kind and should be explained by the lack of interest. That is why the hypothesis that less successful pupils (or the least successful, here) lack one or another type of motivation could not be fully tested.

This is difficult to generalize between the types and across four categories because very different results have been obtained. Moreover, it is difficult to pinpoint what motivation is in many cases, for instance, in the case with Åsa. There can be seen a tendency, though, that less successful (or the least successful) English homework doers are characterized by a lower level of internal motivation. That is why it can be a good idea to motivate them to participate more actively in the classroom activities, and this will be discussed in a more detailed way in the discussion part.

4.2 Other Factors that Enhance Pupils’ Written Homework Performance.

By other factors here are meant some other aspects that influence pupils’ written homework besides those that were previously defined in the introductory part as comprising internal or external motivation. The following additional factors could be identified:

- Having a lot of ideas
- Clarity of the instructions
- The ability to foresee positive outcomes.

It should be mentioned, however, that these factors can be regarded as motivational according to the socio-educational approach that has been described earlier. Moreover, some people argue that the ability to foresee positive outcomes can be regarded as an extrinsic motivational factor because it is connected, in particular, with, marks or instrumental benefits. At the same time, on its own, it “is seen as insufficient to reflect motivation” (Dornyei and Schmidt, 2005, 6). Some other people view the ability to foresee positive outcomes as an intrinsic motivational factor because it is linked to the
ability of the pupils to attribute their results to internal factors, for example the amount of effort they put into their homework.

- Presence of somebody who is skilled in the subject (who is knowledgeable)
- Rare usage of English (“English is not used every day”)
- Possibility to use other interesting sources except the book.

**Having a lot of ideas**

Lena is convinced that she has “a lot of ideas” when she sits down to write. She thinks that “it is interesting” to write then. She can be portrayed as a pupil with rich imagination and also as a creative person. She can be inspired by a book or by music. At the same time, her enthusiasm may decrease if she feels bored by, for example, long breaks between the lessons.

**Clarity of the instructions**

Lena admits the fact that when she understands the task it becomes easier to fulfil it. She describes it in the following words: “If I know what I am going to write about so it will go easier. And if I don’t know then it won’t be so quick…one should concentrate oneself more”. Åsa is also convinced that instructions play an essential role. She says, “if one does not understand the instructions then one’s homework can become difficult”. Åsa needs very detailed instructions and reminders.

**The ability to foresee positive outcomes**

Lena is convinced that if she “feels good about the result” (när det blir bra) it helps her to write. It seems that Lena is able to foresee positive outcomes in most cases and that can explain why she is successful. Even if she feels tired she is able to collect her thoughts and to think positively about her final result.

**Presence of somebody who is skilled in the subject**

When Lena needs help with her written homework occasionally, she wants “to have somebody who is skilled in the subject near” her. Sasha also thinks that he needs help from his teacher, though, for some other reasons. He says “My teacher helps me and I
have more free time at home then”. He is very much pre-occupied with computer games at home. That it why it can be a good idea to spread the workload in such a way that can enable the teacher to control how much effort Sasha puts into his homework outside the classroom. It seems reasonable to assign Sasha with some shorter parts of homework that can be done step-by-step under the teacher’s regular control.

“English is not used every day”

Björn thinks written homework is “more interesting in English than in Swedish because one does not write in English every day”. Such a rare usage of English produces different impacts on different pupils. In the case with Björn, it stimulates him to study in a more efficient way.

Possibility to use other interesting sources except the book

When Björn seeks information he prefers to use Internet sources rather than his textbook, not because the textbook is dull but because “one can seek information more freely on the Internet” and this is “more interesting in comparison to books”. Lena “seldom” uses texts in her textbook. She thinks that “the texts are boring” there and that the textbook “has the boring contents”. Instead, she uses the Internet. She also employs her own “experience quite often” in order to cope with her written homework. Inga finds her textbook good but boring because it becomes “boring in the long run”. She also uses Internet sources to prepare herself.

4.3 Factors that Make Written Homework a Difficult Task.

- Absence of quiet working atmosphere at home or in the classroom.
- Other activities that should be done according to the curriculum
- Dearth of ideas
- Language-related difficulties
- Information seeking
- Lack of writing
Absence of quiet working atmosphere

Pupils’ attitudes to whether to do their written homework at school or at home were different. Some pupils were more disturbed by the classroom environment. Some pupils were more disturbed at home.

a) at home

Lena explains that “when one doesn’t have a quiet working atmosphere” it becomes difficult to do written homework. Lena thinks that “there are more things that disturb” her “at home than in the classroom”, for example, films or home responsibilities. She says, “I try to do so much as possible at school but I do at home a lot, as well”. Sasha explains what disturbs him in the following way: “The computer disturbs me and takes a lot of free time. That is why, I try to write as much as possible at school”. He likes computer games but he is also able to see more serious outcomes of acquiring computer skills. He knows, for instance, that it can lead to a well-paid job.

b) in the classroom

Anna says, “sometimes it is difficult to concentrate oneself and understand some constructions…this is difficult when other people make noise behind me”. Anna thinks that there are more disruptive moments in the classroom than at home. She writes more outside the classroom, as a result.

Other activities that should be done

Lena thinks that she sometimes has “a lot of other things to think about” simultaneously. She continues by stating that one of the difficulties can be that “one must really dedicate time to [written homework] and this is difficult in the middle of the week when one is tired or has leisure activities. Sport, for example”. Lena also thinks that dealing with written homework is “time consuming”, as it takes a lot of time. She can be described as an active person who tries to be “good” (duktig) at many things at school and outside the classroom. She is very diligent and hardworking, and she puts a lot of responsibility on herself.
Dearth of ideas

“Dearth of ideas” is another reason why written homework is difficult according to Lena. She admits that it can be sometimes “difficult to come up” with new ideas. Lena needs to be imaginative to cope with her written homework. Thus, the lack of creativity affects Lena in a negative way.

Language-related difficulties

Some other difficulties that Lena experiences are: “the word order, so that it does not sound strange,” and “the choice of words” she is “going to use so that the text can be more coherent”. Björn also admits, “sometimes I feel myself unsafe whether I was right or wrong” and that it can be difficult to “structure” the written text. Inga thinks that “grammar and how to express oneself in English” can be considered her major obstacles in writing. Anna also thinks it is difficult “how one should write it, in what order and so on…and how to place words correctly”. Sasha explains that it can be difficult “with verbs”. He says, “it is difficult to translate all the words and it is difficult to come up with a good story”. Åsa says, ”If one does not find all the words one needs, if one does not understand all the words and [these words] do not exist at the very back of the book, if one writes a text in English and does not know whether it is good English” then it can become difficult to cope with one’s written homework.

All six pupils, irrespective of what mother tongue they have, feel themselves unsafe how to express themselves in English when they write. For Sasha who does not have the Swedish language as his mother tongue, and who comes across English-Swedish translations constantly, this obstacle can be seen as a dominating one. In order to become more successful in his English homework he needs to develop his knowledge of the Swedish language too.

Information seeking

Björn thinks that it can be difficult sometimes to seek “information, facts”. Åsa also thinks that it can be difficult to seek facts. She also thinks that it is boring to write about “the history of a city or old things”. Anna believes it is “difficult to find relevant facts”,

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Lack of writing

It is worth mentioning that five pupils admit the fact that they write in English only when they have it as their written homework. They also state that they do not get written homework regularly. Björn and Lena think it is useful to do written homework more frequently. This can be due to that they are more “successful” in general, and that they are used to “good” marks in comparison to other four pupils who are afraid of getting worse marks. Inga frankly believes that they write “too seldom”, though she states that she does not need more written homework herself. Only Anna states, “I usually write something in English several times per week, sometimes lyrics, sometimes several lines”. But even she thinks that “it is enough” (bra som det är). She does not want to get written homework more often. Sasha expresses the same viewpoint.

4.4 Positive and Negative Impacts of External Motivation

Returning to the findings of this research, the negative impact of external motivation should be emphasized. In the introductory part, external motivation has been defined as external sources in the form of marks and pragmatic benefits in the future career. From my findings, it should be underlined that, although external motivation could lead to the enhancement in written homework for some pupils (like Björn); some other consequences of employing external motivation could be found. Inga, a less successful English homework doer, states, “[written homework] can be extra stressful because of marks”. Written homework required enormous psychological efforts from Inga, as she felt stressed because of assessment. For Inga, when she wrote only because she did not want to miss the task and, thus, get a bad mark, resulted also in a low level of internal motivation. She admitted the fact that written homework in English for her was “often difficult and boring”, and “only sometimes fun”, and that she needed to be motivated only “a little bit” to cope with her written homework, as the most important factor that could enhance her written performance were marks. Probably, that is the answer to the
question why assessment brought Inga stress. Interestingly enough, Inga stated that time pressure or a set deadline for homework affected her in the same way as assessment. She felt stressed because of deadlines, and some other pupils expressed themselves similarly.

In regard to another less successful English homework doer, Anna (who experiences difficulties in her written homework and submit it often after deadline), external motivation could lead to the resentment in language development because the learner perceived the form of the task as something more important than the contents. It seems that Anna perceived the word homework as something frightening. She focused more on the aspect that her written homework should be done and handed in as soon as possible instead of paying more attention to her writing activity. As a result, her written homework often suffered from poor quality. In this connection, it is useful to repeat what she said: “When I am going to write a text in English I think that, probably, many pupils must have already handed it in and I have just begun…then I feel stressed and then there will be more mistakes”. She felt stressed because of deadlines and her writing activity was often postponed till she was able to cope with her anxiety in order to focus herself on the actual writing process.

The findings of this research imply that the deadlines when they are related to assessment can function as a negative external source (for example, if the pupil does not bring his homework at all, he can not achieve a better mark, in the end). Moreover, it is possible to see deadlines as a negative form of external motivation. The findings of this research also indicate that motivational influences are highly individual. In this research we see that assessment and stress related to deadlines influenced Björn, as well, but being a successful pupil, he was able to manage his anxiety and worked out a profitable study technique to succeed in his written homework. We can also see that for other pupils the negative impact of external motivation can not be underestimated.
### 4.5 Positive and Negative Impacts of Internal Motivation

Positive and negative impacts of external motivation have been discussed. The impact of internal motivation should be discussed from both perspectives, as well. The importance of internal motivation for Sasha is evident, because the absence of interest in what he is doing results too often in failures, even if he is extrinsically motivated well enough. In the case with Sasha, internal motivation is, probably, the only missing factor that can enable him to cope with his written homework. In my opinion, internal motivation can enhance Sasha’s written performance significantly.

Lena’s example is also interesting. As she states it, “it depends greatly on what moods I am at the moment”. Being a successful pupil, she seems to cope with her homework, because she is able to foresee positive outcomes. But she needs to be motivated by internal motivation and external motivation in a more balanced way. Otherwise, her internal state can affect her negatively, and there can be a risk for her to fail.

It is high time to discuss the obtained results and to relate them to the previous research presented in the introductory section.

### 5 Discussion

Motivational factors in written homework are different. Internal and external motivational factors can produce different impacts on different pupils. In this sense, motivation can be seen as highly contextual and changeable. It is evident that what motivates one pupil does not automatically motivate the rest of the class. One’s written homework can start with extrinsic motivation because it was the teacher who said it should be done. Further on, this pupil may get interested in the writing process itself, and, thus, become more internally motivated, in the end.

Obstacles in written homework are different too. Sometimes, all of the pupils experience similar difficulties. More often, the spectrum of difficulties is too wide and varied. Let us return to what Vygotsky stated about the importance of deducing weak sub-zones in the
zone of every pupil’s proximal development to provide them with substantial help from their teacher. In this connection, it is useful to discuss the teacher’s role in how to provide such a help individually. This is a prerogative of the learner-centered approach that stresses each pupil’s needs and strategies to learn. In regard to written homework, this approach suggests that it can be a good idea for pupils to start doing their written homework in the classroom where a good amount of advice can be provided from the teacher individually. Obviously, in the schools of today such a method is useful but it has possible disadvantages. First of all, it becomes extremely time-consuming. To provide all the pupils an individual advice presupposes constant individual planning on the part of the teacher. Secondly, it brings us another dilemma. Bearing in mind the shortage of time, we must decide whether we dedicate more time to the under achieving pupils or whether we teach the successful pupils how to improve their work further. As this question is out of the scope of this dissertation, it is not possible to answer it here.

Creating a classroom motivational context seems more applicable as it, on the one hand, can be based on individual pupils’ needs and, on the other hand, is responsible for a more balanced distribution between students’ participation in the classroom activities and students' effort on homework assignments (Kelly, 2007). In this connection, it is important to repeat Sasha’s and Åsa’s results. They were defined as “the least successful English homework doers” at the beginning of this research. By motivating them to participate more actively in the classroom activities the teacher can make them more successful in their written homework if he pays attention to their needs and interests.

Referring to Dornyei (2007), it seems reasonable to teach these pupils how to increase their internal motivation or how to eliminate negative impacts of external motivation by promoting some self-motivating learner strategies. It is important to help Sasha and Åsa get more interested in what they are doing, by developing satiation control strategies, so that they could spend more time on their written homework, both in the classroom and at home. In the case with Sasha and Åsa, it is also useful to pay more attention to how they study in the classroom and at home, and what environmental distractions disturb them.
Having analysed that, the teacher can easily apply *environmental control strategies* to eliminate these distractions.

In the case with Björn, it seems important to promote *metacognitive control strategies* that can help him to keep monitoring what he is doing irrespective of some possible stress factors. In the case with Inga, it seems logical to promote *emotion control strategies*, so that she could learn how to distance herself from some negative emotions (fear of marks) that prevent her from writing and to teach her to think more positively about what she is doing, for example, by showing her that when one starts to write earlier one can do much more things. It is also important to promote *commitment control strategies*, so that when Inga gets positive rewards like a good mark or the teacher’s appraisal then it will be easier for her to keep and even increase the original goal commitment. All those things can contribute to the quality of her work and a better mark, in the end.

There is, however, one more aspect that deserves a deeper understanding. The definition of motivation made by Lightbown and Spada emphasizes the learner’s communicative needs. In the school policy documents the ability of pupils to actively take part in the written communication is clearly stated. The results obtained in this research indicate that the pupils sometimes are unaware of this important goal of writing. They write too seldom and when they try to be better at writing they, first of all, want to be better at grammar, and spelling. The pupils should be taught how to become better at communicating their thoughts in the written form. Even when they “write for themselves”, as it is in the case with Anna who often writes “several lines” in English outside the classroom. Such understanding of writing when the pupils write to present themselves or to tell other people who they are (this can be done to get a job) may open communicative or, I would say, practical benefits of the L2 learning for them.

One more discussion point should be included here. The research also indicates that the pupils are greatly affected by the *social contexts* (Kaplan and Grabe, 1996) they are placed into. Knowing what personal interests the pupils in the classroom have, the teacher can make the learning process easier. As Lena says it, “when one is interested in
animals then it becomes easier to write about this”. Åsa says the same: “Some things are interesting to write about. For example, when one writes about animals”. Sasha states that he is interested “in computers”. This knowledge is useful as it provides the teacher with a good starting point about what themes to use in order to motivate different pupils to write. In the case with Sasha, it is reasonable to suggest starting from introducing different computer terms in English, so that he can be gradually involved into a process of writing something important about his interest. It seems relevant to refer to our pupils’ social experiences as this is exactly what evokes their interest to accomplish different school tasks. In other words, it should be understood that motivation is not only a cognitive structure but also a social one because it depends on the social contexts. In order to increase one’s motivation, the teacher should gain a deeper understanding of what kind of social environment (in the classroom or outside the classroom) the pupils study and live.

Another aspect is that very often social contexts bear different environmental distractions. One of the tasks for the teacher is to find out how to eliminate these distractions and create a quiet working atmosphere in the classroom. This is important for those pupils who can not concentrate at home. Getting more help in the classroom, these pupils can become more successful in doing their written homework.

6 Conclusion

To conclude this study it is useful to refer to the research questions that were posed in the introductory section of this dissertation. The first question was: “What are the motivational factors that enhance pupils’ written homework performance?” It is closely connected with the second question: “What kinds of motivation do the pupils employ when they write at home?”

The concept of motivation is hard to define as different researches provide different explanations of what motivation really is. Nevertheless, the findings of this research make it possible to provide the following answers to the first two questions. The factors
that enhance pupils’ written homework performance are related to some motivational factors, in particular, the internal motivation (desire to learn more, interest in the task and enjoyment of language learning) and the external motivation (marks and, occasionally, the teacher’s appraisal). It is evident that pupils use both the internal and the external motivation in their written homework. For some of them, the internal motivation plays a greater role. For some pupils, the external motivation dominates.

The ability to come up with new ideas/the ability to use imagination, the understanding of the instructions, the ability to foresee positive results, the presence of somebody who is skilled in the subject, the ability to use different sources, e.g. books, the Internet, personal experience in a proper way can serve as facilitating factors, too.

The third question was: “What are the obstacles to written homework?” According to the findings of this research, the factors that turn coping with written homework into a difficult task can be related to some motivational factors: the absence of interest and the negative psychological impact of the external motivation. As Inga states it, “it can be extra stressful because of marks”. Some other factors may affect the pupils negatively, namely, environmental distractions (noise in the classroom or computer at home), and the pressure of other activities that should be done, the dearth of ideas, language-related difficulties, information seeking and sometimes the inability to perceive the communicative goal of writing.

One more question was: “Can some obstacles to written homework be related to negative motivational influences?” Another finding of this investigation is that the deadlines related to assessment can be treated as a negative form of external motivation. As Anna says, “When I am going to write a text in English I think that, probably, many pupils must have already handed it in and I have just begun…then I feel stressed and then there will be more mistakes”. Inga also feels stressed because of deadlines. She feels she has to hand in her written homework on time. However, one pupil, Björn, mentioned how he was able to cope with stress related to deadlines. He says, “I usually cope with [written homework] before deadline”. And he continues, “I do it several days before [the
deadline] but still I try to do it in a proper way”. In his case, the desire to get rid of stress functioned as a positive facilitating factor in his written homework. Björn considers that his desire “to get rid of stress” and anxiety helps him to work more efficiently.

The fifth question was: “To what extent are the pupils who are active in the classroom better in performing their written homework?” The subsidiary question of this dissertation can be answered in the following way. General observations made in the research class during the whole period of my teaching practice may lead to the idea that those pupils who are active in the classroom tend to cope with their written homework in a more successful way and those pupils who do not submit their written homework tend to participate in the classroom activities less frequently. But this is not the actual result of this dissertation. More research is needed, probably, in the form of very detailed observations.

The last question was: “What makes some pupils totally ignore their written homework?” According to the findings of this research, two major reasons deduced from the interviews that may affect pupils negatively are the absence of interest in what they are doing and some language-related difficulties.

6.1 Suggestions for Further Research

There are some weak sides and obstacles in this research which can be mentioned here. First of all, this dissertation is focused on two types of motivation and is very much restricted by the definitions of the terms made in the introductory part. The limitations of the definitions are obvious, as it becomes complicated in the long run to place facilitating or impeding factors in written homework under one or another motivational category. For instance, the ability to foresee positive outcomes is sometimes said to be an extrinsic motivational factor. However, some other people define it as an intrinsic motivational factor.

Secondly, the instrumental dimension of the L2 motivation could not be researched in a more detailed way because six interviews did not trace this interesting sub-type of
extrinsic motivation. It is interesting to mark that in real life the researcher may obtain the following answer to the question: “What motivates you to do your written homework?”—“A job in the future”. However, this was not the actual findings of this research. This result can be partially explained by the interviewer effect that means that the interviewer can bias the results of any research by steering the interviewed people into one or another direction. It can happen that the interviewees had been biased by the interview questions because they answered in such a way as if they had not seen some other practical benefits of doing their written homework. Another explanation can be that the pupils in the form 8 do not often write in English. And, thus, they may take little notice of the communicative/practical goal of writing.

Thirdly, in the case with Åsa, it was difficult to understand the actual reason why she did not submit her written homework. Moreover, her answers contradicted her actions. During the interview she said: “I usually submit my written homework before deadline”. But actually she was far from being so punctual. And the teacher’s commentary, “Oh, that is typical of Åsa”, only made the situation worse. In other words, I faced the problem of dealing with some interviewed pupils who could be unreliable in their answers. That is why, it is useful to pay more attention to the selection process in the next research, so that more reliable results could be obtained.

Another way of conducting the process of interviewing may also contribute to the fact that other interesting dimensions of both kinds of motivation can be deduced from the interviews.

The enumerated obstacles of the present dissertation should be taken into consideration for further investigations. And, although, the results obtained in the research are highly contextual and, therefore, can hardly be generalized to other people and situations, a better understanding of different motivational processes can lead to a more qualified systematizing of the future findings and an easier way of categorization of the received results. More research on motivation is, obviously, needed.
6 References


Skolverket. Läroplaner. [http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/468/a/1841](http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/468/a/1841) 2007-12-10


7 Appendices

7.1 Interview Guide

Frequency:
1) How often do you have to do your written homework?
2) How often do you write at home?

Time:
1) How quickly do you cope with your written homework?
2) How much time does it take you?

Feelings:
1) What do you feel about your written homework?
2) Do you feel that you are used to it? Do you feel at ease? Do you feel that you are getting lost?
3) What other feelings do you get about your written homework? Stressed? Bored? Encouraged?
4) What makes you feel stressed?
   Is it time pressure?
   Is it the written task itself?
   Is it information seeking?
5) What makes you feel encouraged?

6) Can you give any concrete examples?
7) Do you feel comfortable with your written homework? Or uncomfortable?
8) What makes you feel comfortable?
Information seeking:
1) How do you seek information for your written homework?
2) What sources do you use?
3) To what extent do you get help from your textbook?
4) To what extent does the teacher help you?
5) To what extent do the materials of the lessons help you?
6) How often do you use other sources like your parents’ experience and your friends’ experience?

Motivational aspects:
1) What motivates you to write?

Internal motivational aspects:
• Desire to learn more? Are you interested to learn more about the theme? Is your interest real?
• Desire to improve? Are you interested in improving your writing skills?

External motivational aspects:
• Mark? Do you often write in order to achieve a better mark?
• Teacher’s attitude to you? Do you often write more for the teacher than for yourself?
• Deadline? Time pressure? Do you often write in order to get rid of the task as soon as possible?

Some other aspects
• Your experience? Do you want to share your experience with other people?
• Anybody else’s experience? Do you want to bring anybody else’s experience to the scene?
• Textbook materials? Lessons? Do you want to be better at integrating textbook/lessons materials into your written homework?

**Questioning motivation:**

1) Do you need to be motivated to cope with your written homework?
2) Have you always been motivated to do your written homework?
If not:
3) Have you been successful in doing your written homework then?

**Difficulties:**

1) What difficulties do you experience in the written homework?
2) Are these difficulties linked to some external factors such as time pressure (deadlines) and the like?
3) Are these difficulties connected to writing itself?
4) Can you give examples of any difficulties you experience when you write?

**Practical applications:**

1) What do you find useful in your written homework? Not useful?
2) What do you find interesting? Boring about it?

**Implementation:**

1) What makes it easy to fulfill? Difficult to fulfill?
7.2 Interview Extracts

7.2.1 Interview 1

Lena, 14 år

1. Hur ofta gör du skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
   *Inte särskilt ofta…det är mest glosor*

2. Hur snabb är du?
   *Det varierar på hur det skall vara och vad vi skriver om. Om jag vet vad jag skall skriva om då går det lättare, då skriver jag snabbare. Om jag inte vet...då blir det inte så snabbt...man måste koncentrera sig mer.*

3. Vad är det som gör uppgiften svårt?
   *Det är när man inte har en lugn arbetsmiljö och om jag vet att jag har mycket annat att tänka på.*
   *Ide torka. Svårt att komma på något.*

4. Finns det andra svårigheter?
   *Det är ordföljden …så att det inte låter konstigt. Det är vilka ord jag skall använda så att texten hänger ihop...mer att det blir sammanhängande.*

5. Är det intressant?
   *Det är ganska kul men det tar tid…Om man är intresserad av till exempel djur så är det enklare att skriva om det.*

6. Hur förstår du ordet motivation?
   *Hur man ställer sig till det man skall göra.*

7. Vad motiverar dig att skriva?
   *Det är nog för att jag har många idéer och för att jag tycker att det är kul!...Det beror på vilket humör jag är på. Om jag är glad klarar jag det mesta och om jag är trött så går nästan inget.*

8. Finns det något annat som motiverar dig?
   *När jag vet vad jag skall skriva om och när det blir bra…när jag är på bra humör.*

9. Hur ofta använder du dig av din textbok när du skriver på engelska?

10. Hur söker du information då?
    *På Internet…Jag använder min egen erfarenhet ganska ofta.*

11. Hur stor roll spelar betyg för dig?
    *Lite, det är ju klart att man har det i huvudet när man jobbar.*
12. Vad är det som är bra med skriftliga hemlåxor i engelska?
*Man lär sig mycket mer.*

13. Vad är det som är mindre bra?
*Det är att man verkligen måste ta sig tid till det och det är svårt mitt i veckan när man är trött eller har fritidsaktiviteter till exempel sport.*

14. Hur ofta behöver du hjälp med dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?
*Ibland. När jag gör läxor vill jag gärna ha någon som är kunnig i ämnet nära ifall jag behöver hjälp. Jag försöker göra så mycket som möjligt i skolan men jag gör hemma med... Det är mer som stör mig hemma än i skolan.*

15. Behöver du göra skriftliga läxor i engelska oftare för att träna dig?
*Ja, det behöver jag.*

### 7.2.2 Interview 2

**Björn, 14 år**

1. Hur ofta gör du skriftliga hemlåxor i engelska?
*Sällan, det är mest glossor och texter...men alltid brukar göra dem. Jag brukar inte skriva på engelska så ofta. Jag skriver på svenska oftare.*

2. Hur snabb är du?
*Jag brukar vara färdig innan ”deadline”.*

3. Varför?
*Jag vill slippa stress. Jag gör det några dagar innan men ändå... Jag försöker skriva det på ett bra sätt.*

4. Känner du dig stressad ofta?
*Nej. Jag känner mig ganska säker.*

5. Är det roligt med skriftliga hemlåxor i engelska?
*Det är roligt att skriva på engelska, roligare än på svenska...det är roligare eftersom man inte använder det varje dag.*

6. Finns det något tråkigt?
*Nej, inget är tråkigt.*

7. Hur förstår du ordet motivation?
8. Vad är det som motiverar dig att skriva?

Jag vill få ett bra betyg. Jag vill lära mig olika saker också. Jag är intresserad av att skriva bättre…grammatik, stavning, mm.

9. Behöver du vara motiverad för att klara uppgiften?

Nej, jag kan klara det ändå.

10. Hur söker du information?

På Internet: Google och Wikipedia.

11. Tycker du att din textbok är tråkig?

Nej, textboken är bra. Men på Internet kan man söka lite fritt. Det är roligare än böcker.

12. Vad är det som är nyttigt med skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?

Man lär sig stava bättre, man lär sig bättre grammatik och får bättre kunskap om ämnet man skriver om.

13. Vad är det som är mindre bra?

Jag tycker inte att något är dåligt med det.

14. Vad är det som gör uppgiften svårt?

Hitta på saker, fakta och struktur. Ibland känner jag mig osäker om jag skrivit rätt eller fel.

15. Hur ofta behöver du hjälp med dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?


16. Behöver du flera skrivuppgifter i engelska?

Ja, det kan vara bra att ha flera skrivuppgifter.

7.2.3 Interview 3

Åsa, 13 år

1. Hur ofta gör du skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?

Inte så ofta…för att vi får det inte så ofta.

2. Hur snabb är du?

Det tar en kvart eller 30 minuter…stora arbeten tar mer tid. För det mesta hinner jag lämna in läxan före ”deadline”. Jag glömmer ibland arbetet hemma.

3. Vad tycker du om skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
Ibland känns der intressant speciellt när man gör övningar i boken. Ibland känns det tråkigt. Det är jobbigt att hitta fakta…leta efter fakta är inte så kul men det kan vara intressant att skriva sedan med hjälp av fakta.

4. Känner du dig stressad?
   Nej, inte stressad.

5. Hur söker du information?

6. Hur ofta behöver du hjälp med dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?
   Ibland. Min lärare hjälper mig när jag behöver. Jag får hjälp av mina föräldrar ibland.

7. Hur förstår du ordet motivation?
   Jag vet inte. Jag vet inte vad ordet motivation betyder.

8. Motivation är någonting som påverkar dig eller mig att göra saker. Vad motiverar dig att skriva?

9. Hur stor roll spelar betyg för dig?
   Betyg spelar rätt stor roll, jag vill inte få dåliga betyg.

10. Hur stor roll spelar lärarens uppfattning om dig?
    Det betyder mycket för att om dem säger att man inte kan det bra, försöker man göra det bättre.

11. Vad är det som gör uppgiften svårt?
    Om man inte förstår instruktioner blir läxan svår. Om man inte hittar alla ord man behöver, om man inte förstår alla ord och de inte står med längst bak i boken. Om man skall skriva en engelsktext och vet inte om det är bra engelska.

12. Vad är det som är bra med skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
    Man lär sig ofta nya ord, stavning och hur ordet skall böjas. Man lär sig mer att stava.

13. Vad är det som är minde bra?
    Det dåliga är att man kanske inte kan uttala orden utan bara skriver dem.

14. Finns det något tråkigt med skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
    Det är tråkigt att skriva om historia om en stad och gamla saker. Vissa saker är intressanta som till exempel när man skriver om djur.

15. Var gör du dina läxor: i skolan eller hemma?
Jag gör läxan i skolan på läxläsning. Men det är enklare att koncentrera sig hemma när det är tyst.

7.2.4 Interview 4

Inga, 14 år

1. Hur ofta gör du skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
Sällan. Och aldrig skriver på engelska i annat fall.

2. Hur snabbt gör du det?

3. Vad tycker du om skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?

4. Vad motiverar dig att skriva?
Jag måste lämna in det. Annars är det inte godkänt. Det kan vara extra stressigt p.g.a. betyg.

5. Behöver du vara motiverad för att klara uppgiften?
Ja, lite motiverad.

6. Vad är det som gör uppgiften svårt?
Grammatik och att uttrycka sig på engelska.

7. Hur ofta behöver du hjälp med dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?

8. Hur söker du information?
Det är lättast att söka på Internet. Textboken är bra men tråkig...blir tråkig i längden.

9. Behöver du göra skriftliga läxor i engelska oftare för att träna dig?
Det är viktigt med skivuppgifter men det är bra som det är. Jag behöver inte mer hemläxor...Fast jag tycker vi skriver för lite.

10. Vad är det som är bra med skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
Man lär sig alltid något nytt. Det är bra med läxor för att man lär sig.

11. Vad är det som är mindre bra?
Det är oftast jobbigt och tråkigt.
7.2.5 Interview 5
Anna, 14 år

1. Hur ofta gör du dina skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?
   Vi har inte haft det så mycket. Men jag brukar skriva någonting på engelska några gånger i veckan, ibland dikter och ibland några rader.

2. Hur snabb är du?
   Jag behöver ta min läxa hem för att göra det klart. Det tar tid.

3. Är det intressant?

4. Vad är det som är svårt?
   När jag skall skriva en text på engelska så har kanske jätte många lämnat in den och jag har knappt börjat då känner jag mig stressad, och då blir det mer fel.

   Ibland är det svårt att koncentrera sig och fatta vissa meningar …det är svårt när andra folk stimmar och sånt bakom mig…hur man skulle skriva det, i vilken ordning och sånt…och sätta orden på rätt plats

   Det är jobbigt att hitta upp en bra fakta.

5. Hur uppfattar du ordet motivation?
   Jag vill lära mig mer och sedan beror det på mina betyg med.

6. Hur stor roll spelar betyg för dig?
   Betyg spelar ganska så stor roll för mig.

7. Vad motiverar dig att skriva?
   För de säger det och för att jag vill lära mig fler saker.

8. Hur söker du information?
   Jag söker information på Internet eller i böcker, till exempel uppslagsböcker. Om jag inte vet vad ordet betyder eller vet hur det stavas kollar jag längst bak i min engelsk bok.

9. Hur ofta behöver du hjälp med dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?
   Ibland. Jag frågar min lärare, pappa, mamma och storebror.

10. Behöver du vara motiverad för att klara uppgiften?
    Ja, jag behöver vara motiverad annars blir det svårare att klara det.
11. Behöver du göra skriftliga läxor i engelska oftare för att träna dig?

Nej, det är bra som det är.

### 7.2.6 Interview 6

Sasha, **invandrarbakgrund**, 14 år

1. Hur ofta gör du skriftliga hemläxor i engelska?


2. När behövs det verkligen?

   När jag skriver för att få betyg.

3. Hur snabb är du?

   Det tar en timme bara. Jag tycker inte om att sitta för länge.

4. Är det intressant?

   Jag har typ inget intresse för hemläxor.

5. Hur uppfattar du ordet motivation?

   Det är intresse ... att göra saker.

6. Behöver du vara motiverad för att klara uppgiften?

   Ja, det behöver jag.

7. Vad motiverar dig att göra dina skriftliga läxor i engelska?


8. Är det svårt att skriva på engelska?


9. Hur söker du information?

   Huvudsakligen i böcker men ibland på Internet.

10. Hur stor roll spelar betyg för dig?

    Det spelar mycket stor roll.

11. Känner du dig stressad på grund av det?

    Nej, jag känner mig inte stressad.
12. Behöver du göra skriftliga läxor i engelska oftare för att träna dig? 

*Nej, jag vill inte ha det oftare.*