

MASTER'S DEGREE PROJECT

The influence of students' topic  
choice: Implementation of a sample  
in a high school in Navarre.

ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR: Vicky Zenotz

STUDENT: Pedro Arellano Gurbindo

*ABSTRACT: The main aim of this study is to analyze the motivation that a group of students from a secondary school in Navarre have towards learning English as a second language. After discovering their topic preferences, a didactic unit is developed according to their likes and then implemented. Finally the effect this unit has had on students' motivation towards English language is analyzed. What we expect with this research is to prove that students' motivation towards English improves if they work in English with a topic of their choice. The sample used consists of 33 students from second grade of ESO. Regarding to the methodology used, students had to complete a pre and post-test questionnaire related to motivation, which included questions about their topic preferences. Then a unit based on students' topic preferences was implemented. After collecting different data, the results show that student's topic preference at the time of learning English language has a positive impact in student's motivation towards learning the English language*

*KEY WORDS: Motivation, topic choice, foreign language learning, L2 learning.*

*RESUMEN: Este estudio analiza la motivación que un grupo de estudiantes de secundaria en Navarra tienen hacia el aprendizaje del inglés. Posteriormente, se elaborará y completará una unidad didáctica basada en los temas preferidos del alumnado para finalmente poder estudiar los efectos que esta unidad puede causar en la motivación del alumnado. Lo que esperamos mediante este estudio es demostrar como el trabajar con un tema elegido por los alumnos en inglés aumenta la motivación del alumnado hacia el mismo idioma. La muestra utilizada en el estudio es de 33 alumnos de segundo curso de ESO. En cuanto a la metodología los estudiantes tuvieron que completar un cuestionario en dos ocasiones ( pre-test y post-test) junto a una unidad didáctica basada en un tema de su elección. Después de recoger los diferentes resultados, podemos decir que la elección del tema a la hora de estudiar inglés, tiene un efecto positivo en la motivación de los estudiantes hacia el idioma.*

*PALABRAS CLAVE: Motivación, elección del tema, aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros, aprendizaje de segunda lengua.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is clear that in every modern society the fact of learning a foreign language has become a reality. The development of new tools as internet and other resources created the necessity of communication between people from different parts of the world. In order to satisfy these needs a lingua franca was established. Regarding to the political hegemony of the UK and US in that time, English was considered to be a proper language to communicate the world.

This decision had a great impact in every modern country and society. In countries such as Spain, it was not until the decade of the 90's when English started to be introduced massively. The main tool for making the population learn a foreign language was to make it a school subject. Since this decade, students have started to learn English in primary and secondary schools. English started to be taught and used in different areas and became the most learnt foreign language in Spain replacing other languages as French. But was this process done properly?

Some studies show that Spain is one of the countries with the lowest percentage of English speakers in Europe (Rubio, Martinez, 2012). This amount is three or four times smaller than the one of countries such as the Netherlands, Finland or Germany and slightly lower than the one of other latin countries as Portugal or Italy. Taking this information into account it is clear that it is necessary to analyze the different factors that originate this worrying situation. There are different factors that help or do not help at the time of learning a new language. The personal view of the target language, its social category or the educational view are just some of the variables that could explain these results. The different attitudes and motivation that students have towards the foreign language they are learning also could explain if the process of learning a language is being done properly or not.

Not all the students face the fact of learning English in the same way. Whereas some of them feel really comfortable learning it, others have an opposite feeling in the same situation. Different variables and in this case different kind of motivation affects the students of a language in different ways. Analyzing how this different kind of

motivations can be improved would be a real step forward towards becoming English a more attractive language for them. The fact of giving students the possibility of choosing the topic they want to learn could be an example in order to fulfill this aim.

By means of this research, I would like to specify the different attitudes and motivation that secondary school students have towards English in our society. Taking into account the different motivational theories developed by Dornyei (2005) and Gardner (1983) different aspects of motivation will be analyzed. At the same time, the effects that the chance of working with a topic of students' choice creates in their motivation will be analyzed. Together with this we would like to investigate if working with a topic of their choice in English enhances their interest and motivation towards the English language.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a review of the literature deemed relevant for the research objectives. This includes a brief overview of the concepts of motivation and its different dimensions and variables.

In normal life, we call motivation to the driving force that causes the flux from desire to will in life. Motivation has been shown to have roots in physiological, behavioral, cognitive and social areas (dictionary.com). Motivation is considered an inner drive to behave or act in a certain manner. The inner conditions such as wishes, desires or goals, activate to move in a particular direction in behavior.

When applying this information to second language learning, motivation is considered to be the psychological quality that leads people to achieve a goal. In terms of linguistics, socio-linguistics and second-language acquisition, a number of language learner motivation models have been postulated in order to explain how motivation can affect to L2 acquisition (Zenotz, 2012)

Among different authors, Gardner (1985) defines motivation as the extent to which a person struggles to learn a language by desire to do so and the satisfaction

experienced in doing it. Dornyei (2001), defined motivation as the choice of a particular action, the persistence, and the effort invested on it. Regarding to the various perspectives that have been adopted in the study of motivation in language learning, they can be grouped into three basic approaches. The social-psychological approach, the cognitive approach and the current perspectives.

Gardner is considered one of the greatest references in this field. He makes a distinction between two types of motivation. Instrumental motivation vs integrative motivation. Gardner (1983, p. 203) defines instrumental motivation as “learning a language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner”. More specifically, it means that a learner is instrumentally motivated when he/she wants to learn a language to pass an examination, to use it in one’s job, to use it somewhere abroad...

On the other hand, integrative motivation, was defined as “learning a language because the learner wishes to identify himself with or become integrated into the society” of the target language (Gardner, 1983, p. 203). Therefore, a learner is integratively motivated when he/she learns a language because he/she wants to know more of the culture and values of the foreign language group, to make contact with the speaker of the languages, to live in the country concerned...

Recently, the Gardnerian construct of integrativeness has come under serious attack. The main reason for problems with integrativeness is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a high number of students learn a second language in a foreign language setting with the purpose of being able to communicate with other non-native speakers in an international environment. This fact is especially true in the case of English, since it became an international language serving as a lingua franca in a globalized world. Integrativeness in the sense as defined by Gardner involves the language learner’s identification with native speakers of the L2. In our globalized world, however, there is no salient L2 community to identify with in the case of English. Moreover, for a high number of learners, especially in a foreign language setting, the identification with native speakers does not seem to be a relevant motivating factor.

Besides Gardner's integrative and instrumental constructs, Cooper and Fishman (1977) mentioned a third type of motivation which they termed "developmental". "Developmental" or "personal motivation" refers to motivation relating to "personal satisfaction". This includes such activities as watching movies, reading books...

In an attempt to answer the different challenges that the ambiguity of integrativeness and instrumentality presented, Dornyei (2005), proposed the model of the *L2 Motivational self-system*. Instead of the traditional *instrumental* and *integrative* terms, this model, presents three different components. If the person we would like to become speaks an L2, *the ideal L2 self* is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. The next component is the one of the *Ought-to L2 self* which concerns to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. The last component would be the *L2 learning experience*, which concerns motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (impact of the teacher, curriculum...).

In our research, we submitted the different models explained above to a population of learners of English as a foreign language. Taking different motivational dimensions into account, different motivational constructs will be measured. A series of items will be analyzed under the constructs of "instrumentality", "integrativeness" and "cultural interest". We will also analyze the different results under the different motivational variables which had been developed by Dornyei's *L2 motivational-system theory*. We won't refer directly to the three components explained above, due to the terms of the data collecting procedures.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 Does topic choice equally affect students' motivational dimensions according to Dornyei's construct?
- 2 Does topic choice equally affect students' motivational dimensions according to other constructs?

In order to answer the research questions, the tools used were a questionnaire and a didactic unit implemented by the researcher. This research investigated the motivation of secondary school students towards the English subject. In the process, quantitative and qualitative data was used. What we want to analyze is if the choice of a topic by the students for their English lessons creates any kind of change in their motivation. The questionnaire was completed by two different groups. The researcher decided not to establish a control group as a consequence of the limitations it could cause in the sample.

#### Participants

This study was carried out in the second grade of ESO of a Spanish public school. The amount of students that took part in the research was 33 people who belonged to different classes of the same school. Although they were studying in the same course, the age of the students is quite different and moves in a 13-16 year old range.

13 years old students: 16 ( 48%)

14 years old students: 12 (36%)

15 years old students: 3 ( 9,5%)

16 years old students: 2 ( 6,5%)

Apart from this, there is also a little difference between the amount of male and female participants.

Male participants: 20 ( 60%)

Female participants: 13 ( 40%)

Regarding to some characteristics of the students, it must be said that the majority of the participants consider Spanish their native language. However, there is a group of participants who don't have Spanish as their native language. These participants come from countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Poland or Marocco and suppose the 20% of the sample. We will consider these students as bilingual students as they have similar easiness at the time of speaking Spanish and their respective native languages.

Taking into account the status of the English language in this secondary high school, English is considered a compulsory subject all through secondary education. In this particular high school, students can choose also another language as French, Basque or German as an optional subject.

### Instruments

The instruments used for gathering all the required data consisted of a questionnaire, implemented in a pre-test and a post-test (Annexe I and II). Apart from this, the researcher also developed a didactic unit (Annexe III) related to the choices of the students. The pre-test and the post-test had the same kind of questions and items except from the last part of them which contained different questions related to the different stages of the research.

Both test contained 4 different parts. The first part consisted of 9 different items. These items had to be answered on a five-point Likert scale where students had to mark to what extent the statements characterized them. The second part had two



different items. These items had to be answered by rounding one of the 5 different choices they had. All These items aimed to measure the effects that topic choice produces in the motivational dimensions according to Dornyei's motivational constructs :

- *Linguistic self-confidence* (2 ITEMS): Student's views on how easily and successfully they will be able to acquire English. Example: I think I can learn English in an easy way.
- *Language use anxiety* (1 ITEM): The level of anxiety felt when students use English in everyday life. Example: I feel uneasy when I speak in English
- *Classroom anxiety* (1 ITEM): The level of anxiety felt in language classes. Example: I feel embarrassed when I speak in English during the class.
- *Parental encouragement* (1 ITEM): The extent to which parents encourage their children to study English. Example: My parents, friends or people around encourage me to learn English.
- *Language learning attitudes* (3 ITEMS): The extent to which students like learning languages. Example: I would like to learn foreign languages.
- *Motivated learning behavior* (2 ITEMS): Students' efforts and persistence in learning English. Example: I want to work hard in the English subject.

In the third part of the questionnaire, participants had to answer the question *Why do you learn English?* Students had 8 different options for answering the question as they preferred. These 8 different choices intended to cover how topic choice affects the following motivational dimensions according to other constructs:

-*Integrativeness*: language learner's attitude to L2 speakers and their cultures. Example: I would like to know the culture related to English speaking countries.

-*Instrumentality*: Utilitarian benefits associated with being able to speak the L2 such as jobs... Example: I think English will be useful in the future for me.

*-Cultural interest: Attitudes to L2 cultural products (films, magazines, music...).*

Example: I want to understand films and music in English.

In the last part of the questionnaire students had to answer two questions related to the research. These questions changed from the pre-test to the post-test. The two questions of the pre-test were related to the topic choice of the students and their opinion. On the other hand, the two questions from the post-test were related to the opinion and evaluation of the previously developed didactic unit.

Apart from the questionnaire, a didactic unit was developed. Based on the answers of the 4<sup>th</sup> part of the pre-test, the researcher established a topic chosen by the students for this unit. The unit worked with different English skills as writing, listening, speaking and grammar, all of them related to the previously selected topic. During this unit, students had to participate actively in class, answering questions and completing different exercises. As the unit's topic was the one of music, participants had to listen to different songs. This last activity served for describing different type of music, analyzing the different lyrics of the songs...

Apart from this, the researcher also took notes and observed the different attitudes and interest of the students towards the unit during the different lessons when the unit was performed.

#### Data collection procedures

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher, based in items and questions appearing in previous done research ( Al-Tamimi, Shuib, 2009) (Kormos, Csizer, 2008) ( Uribe, Gutierrez, Madrid, 2007).

Due to the low English level of the students, the questionnaire was carried out in Spanish. Students were asked to give honest responses during the whole process. The pre-test was completed by the participants in English class hours. As the sample

was divided in two different groups, the pre-test and post-test were completed at a different range of time. When all the items were explained and analyzed thoroughly, students started to complete their respective tests. The questionnaire was completed by all the participants that attended English class in that day.

Once the pre-test was completed, the researcher designed a didactic unit related to the topic that the students had chosen. The didactic unit was handed and taught by the researcher in 4 different sessions. First, the guideline of the unit was explained. After giving the right explanations, every student started following the class and the unit. The researcher guided the students along the different sessions taking the role of a teacher and measured their amount of interest by observing their attention and how much they participated in class.

When the implementation of the unit ended, the students completed a post-test. This post-test questionnaire was very similar to the one done before the didactic unit was implemented. Just the students who have completed the pre-test were allowed to complete this post-test. As in the pre-test, the post-test was divided in 4 different parts. The first 3 parts contained the same items and questions and the only difference remained in the 4<sup>th</sup> part where students had to give an opinion about what had supposed the unit for them. In this last part, the researcher emphasized the importance of giving honest responses again.

#### Data collection analysis

The data collected in the present study was of two types, qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data of the questionnaires was analyzed using different formulas in order to know the different means of the results. The qualitative data was collected by the researcher taking notes and observing the participants.

#### 4. RESULTS

##### Results of how topic choice affects students motivational dimensions according to Dornyei's construct

The results of both, pre-test and post-test questionnaires will be analyzed taking into account the different research questions. Our first analysis of the questionnaire will be the one related to how topic choice affects students' motivational dimensions according to Dornyei's construct. For finding an answer to this question, each participant had to give a different value on a five-point Likert scale to a set of different items related to motivation. Table 1 depicts mean values representing subjects' responses to the different items. It also compares the differences between the answers in the pre-test and the post-test. The means are simply arithmetic average of the responses with 1 point assigned for "totally disagree", 2 for "partially disagree", 3 for "neutral", 4 for "partially agree" and 5 for "totally agree".

Table 1: How topic choice affects students' motivational dimensions

Motivational dimensions	Items	n	Pre-test mean (Each item)	Post-test Mean (Each item)	Overall mean (pre-test) (Each variable)	Overall mean (post-test) (Each variable)	Mean of the pre-test	Mean of the post-test
Linguistic self-confidence	a) I think I can learn English in an easy way	33	3.12	3.63	3.42	3.78	3.55	3,67
	b) I think I will speak English properly in the future	33	3.72	3.93				
Language use anxiety	c) I feel uneasy when I speak in English	33	3.06	2.96	3.06	2.96		
Classroom anxiety	d) I feel uneasy when I use the English language in class	33	2.9	2.88	2.9	2.88		
Parental encouragement	e) People encourage me to learn English (parents, friends...)	33	4.06	4.18	4.06	4.18		
Language learning attitudes	f) I would like to learn foreign languages	33	3.6	3.93	4.03	4.21		
	g) I think that learning English is good for me	33	4.48	4.63				
	h) My interest towards the English language is really high	33	4.03	4.09				
Motivated learning behaviour	i) My interest towards the English subject is...	33	3.87	3.96	3.88	4.02		
	j) I don't care if I can't communicate in English language	33	3.9	4.09				

\*The items in grey color consist of inverse items. In these cases the punctuation has been recalculated or interpreted in a different way.

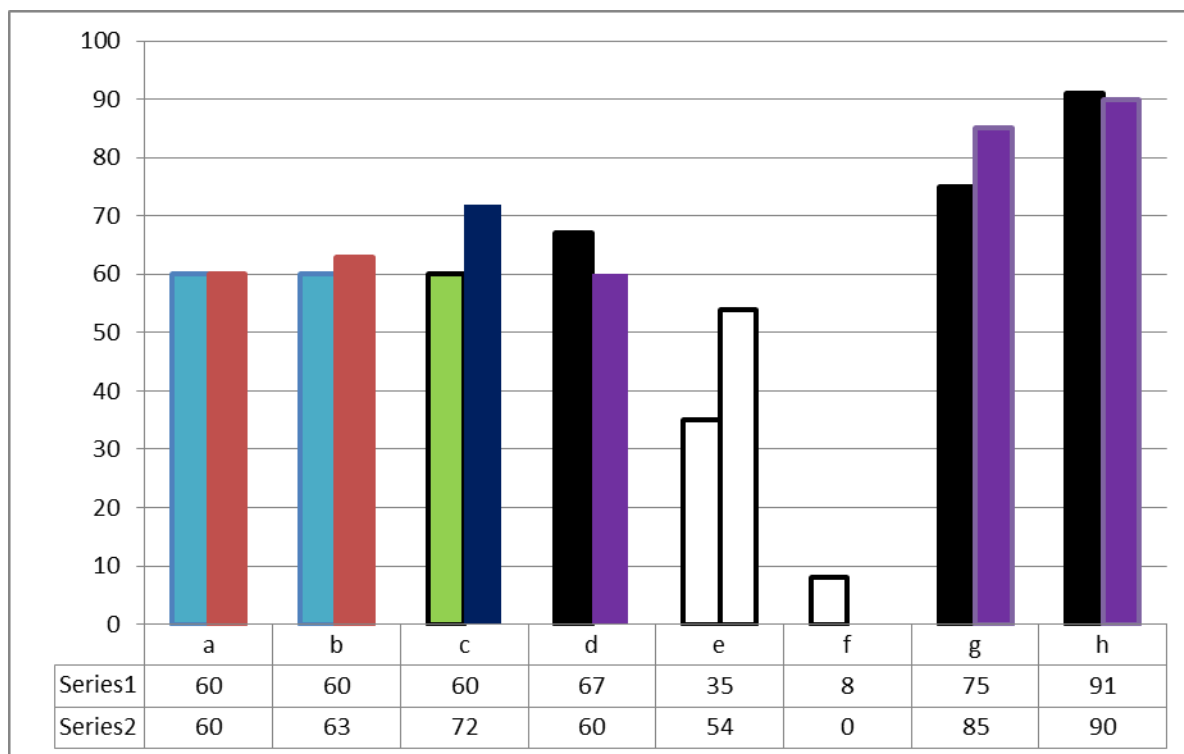
Regarding to the different data analyzed in the pre and post-test questionnaires, in general terms the results and mean of each item has risen slightly from one test to the other. The dimension that received the highest scores was the one of language learning attitudes (items f, g and h), which received an overall mean of 4.21. As an example, the students gave a really high punctuation to the item which says that “learning English is something good for me” (mean of 4.63 in the post-test). Other motivational dimensions as *parental encouragement* or *motivated learning behavior* received means above 4.

When comparing the results of the pre-test and the post-test, we can see that motivational dimensions related to classroom anxiety and language use anxiety, have had a little improvement. The means of the post-test have slightly decreased. Being these both items, inverse items, in this case the decrease in the mean supposes something positive in motivational terms. Next to the highest mean dimensions, it is the one of *linguistic self-confidence*. Although we can observe an improvement in the mean from the pre to the post-test, the reality is that all the items included in this dimension obtained a mean below 4. Nevertheless, it is this dimension the one that has the biggest increase in the mean from the pre-test to the post-test.

#### Results of how topic choice equally affects students motivational dimensions according to other constructs

As it has been explained before, in order to answer the research question from above a question was presented to students in the questionnaire. *Why do you study English?* By this question, the researcher aimed to measure how motivational dimensions based in other constructs are affected at the time of learning English. In the graphic below, we can observe the calculation of the percentages related to the different items.

Graphic 1: How topic choice affects students motivational dimensions according to other constructs.



Series 1 : Pre-test results    Integrativeness    Instrumentality    Cultural interest

Series 2 : Post-test results    Integrativeness    Instrumentality    Cultural interest

Regarding to the different data collected for answering the research question from above, we can observe that the three motivational variables are quite valued among the participants. Any item related to the three analyzed variables are over the percentage of 60. The variable of instrumentality is the most valued one among students. Items such as “I could communicate with people around the world” and “English will be useful for me in the future” have been chosen by more than the 75 % of students. Also, other items as item “f” are connected to the negative perception of integrativeness. The graphic shows us that the percentage in this item is really low.

When analyzing the comparison between the pre-test and the post-test, there is not a big difference in the percentage. It is quite remarkable that in item “f” (If I could I wouldn’t learn English) the percentage goes down from the 8% in the pre-test to the 0% in the post-test. Another significant change is the ascent from 60% to 72% in the item “c” ( I can understand songs, films... in English), clearly related to the material implemented in the unit. Item “d” (I like to learn a second language) also shows us a clear descent from the 67% of the pre-test to the 60% of the post-test.

Apart from the results related to the answer of the different research questions, more motivational data was also gathered. The pre-test contained two different questions. The first question referred to the kind of topics students would like to work with during the English class. Additionally, another question works with the same topic and asked students if working with topics of his/her interest would improve his/her interest in the subject. In a free choice question, music was the most chosen topic (around the 50% of the participants) followed by other topics as sports and animals.

In the second question, most of the answers were affirmative. Some participants said that working with topics they like would help them at the time of paying more attention in class. Other students also gave different answers telling that working with topics they like would make them feel more attached to the subject. It was also written that normally students work in English class with topics they don’t like. As they said, the fact of working with topics they like would make the class much more entertaining for them. Among other answers, another participant wrote that working with things of their interest would help them at the time of acquiring vocabulary. He intended to say that working with words they already know would facilitate their acquirement of English words.

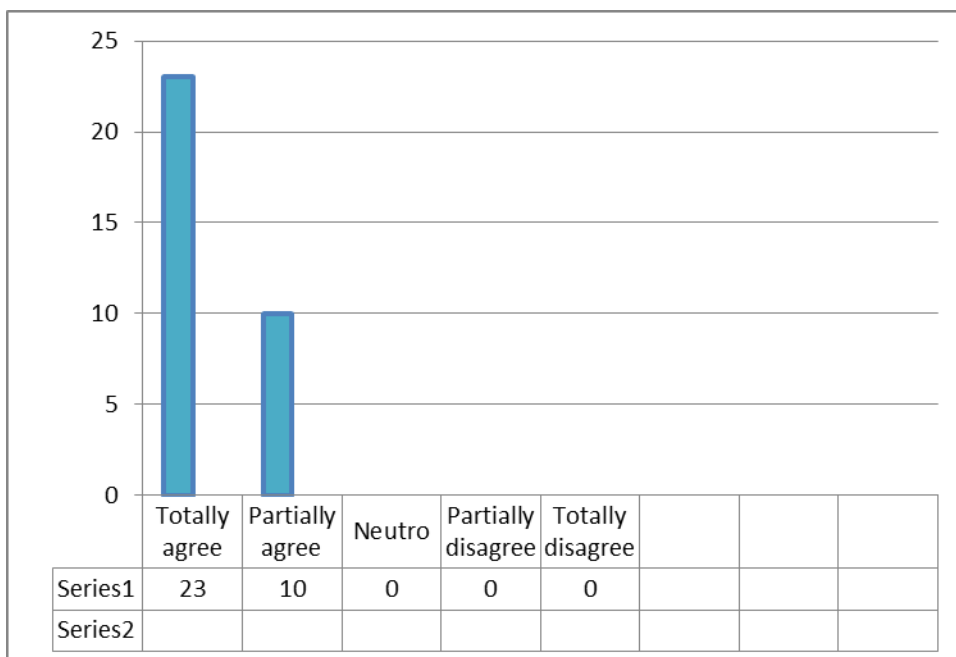


Another part of the post-test also contained two questions. The questions of this part of the post-test dealt with the interest of the participants towards the unit. The first question aimed to know if working with topics the students like (for instance the unit’s topic) had increased their interest towards English. Most of the answers were affirmative in this case. Some of the participants answered that it had been easier for them, others that it had been more entertaining... Some of them also mentioned that working with songs and music made them understand better the lyrics and acquire in a better way the vocabulary. Also, another participant wrote that working with a topic they liked, had helped them at the time of speaking and communicating in English. Apart from this, it was also mentioned that working with this kind of method helped the participants at the time of improving their pronunciation.

Regarding to the second question of this part, students had to make a choice among five different options related to a statement. The statement was the next one: *“I’ve enjoyed the unit music experience”*.

In the graphic below we can observe the different answers that students gave.

Graphic 2: Answers to the item *I’ve enjoyed the unit music experience*.



As we can see in this graphic, the majorities of the participants is totally or partially agree with the statement. There is no participant that feels neutral, partially disagree or totally disagree.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This section presents a discussion of the study findings. The findings are discussed according to the order of the different motivational constructs analyzed with the data collection instruments. What we intend to know is how topic choice affects the different motivational constructs we have analyzed before.

### Discussion of how topic choice affects students motivational dimensions according to Dornyei's motivational construct.

Analyzing the results obtained in the pre-test, it could be said that students don't have an overall negative conception of the English language. The linguistic self-confidence is neither high nor low. This means they don't consider English something difficult for them. It is quite remarkable that the lowest means in these motivational dimensions correspond to the ones of language use anxiety and classroom anxiety. Both dimensions have to do with speaking skills. The low punctuation of the patterns makes us see that speaking is not quite a popular skill among students, probably due to its absence in class.

Other dimensions as parental encouragement, may give us a vision of how is English considered in the society where the research was carried out. As most of the participants feel encouraged to learn English by people around them, we can conclude that English has quite a good value in the society. This kind of encouragement also has some kind of good effects in the participants' learning attitudes. The majority of the participants think that learning English means something good for them and undoubtedly this fact encourages them when they have to learn it.

Even though we can consider students' attitudes and interest quite high, the interest decreases when we speak about the English subject. The relation of English with school has a bad connotation for students and this fact is what makes them lessen their interest in the language. Nevertheless, most of the students want to speak and communicate in English and they care quite a lot about it.

By giving the option of choosing the topic of the unit to the participants the researcher wanted to make English more accessible for them. Having the chance of learning things they concern about, may increase students motivation and wants of learning the language.

Taking Dornyei's motivational dimensions as a guide, we can see that in general terms all the motivational dimensions received an increase in their mean results from the pre-test to the post-test. Working with the topic they wanted, helped when understanding and completing exercises. On the other hand, their linguistic self-confidence grew quite a lot. After implementing the unit students felt more confident about their present and future chances of learning English. It is this fact what makes them increase their motivation about their English learning chances.

Language learning attitudes also had a great increase in the mean of the results. As in the linguistic self-confidence, working with a topic of their interest, make them see English as something different. This fact enforced the good impact English can have in their lives. In the same way, the fact of learning this concrete material during English classes in school, supposed a considerable rise in the interest of the students towards the English subject.

The only two dimensions that maintained the same mean values or had a very low increase were the ones referred to the language use. The application of the unit had a little impact in these dimensions. Participants used English language during the classes, answered questions and also raised them. According to the results, the majority doesn't feel comfortable when speaking English. Although they spoke quite a lot during the unit, apparently it is not something that makes them feel comfortable

and this fact makes us see that something new should be done in order to make the participants feel better when they speak in English.

Summing up, we could say that the implementation of the didactic unit based on students' topic choice has affected positively Dornyei's motivational constructs. All the analyzed dimensions have received a higher mean (higher motivation) after the implementation of the didactic unit.

#### Discussion of the different motivational dimensions according to other constructs.

This part of the research aims to analyze the importance that each one of the different motivational dimensions had in the participants taking as a guide other motivational constructs. Also, we want to see if the application of the unit has any effect in any of these dimensions. We would like to determine also, which of the three types of motivation could be the primary source of this research participants' motivation towards the English language.

The findings show that students demonstrated greater emphasis on instrumental reasons for learning the English language ( Ex: I will use English to communicate with other people). We can consider this construct the most important one among students. This fact apparently reinforces the idea that the students see English as playing a vital role in their lives, either currently or in the future.

Other motivational constructs as integrativeness or cultural interest received lower results. Integrativeness, defined as an "international posture" (Yashima, 2002), includes " interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, or as it can be seen in this research, to have positive treatment towards either the English language or the culture of English speaking countries. More than half of the students made this choice.

The cultural interest, tightly related to personal reasons (interest in understanding English songs, films...) was also regarded as an important motive by the students. The big influence that either American or British products have in the

European society may have produced these high results in the cultural interest variable.

We can say that the topic choice of the students didn't have any big effect in the analyzed motivational dimensions. From the pre-test to the post-test, we could just see little ascents in the percentage of some particular items. Working with the topic of music and its different activities, raised students' interest in the English cultural products such as songs or films, mostly related to their personal satisfaction. Working with things and products from places that are not usual for the participants, made them feel more concerned about how important could be to communicate with people from other parts of the world. Related to this, an instrumental item (I could communicate with foreign people) had an important ascent when comparing both questionnaires, but as explained before, these effects are more related to the particularity of the items in question.

Students were also asked to value the didactic unit. The majority of the students gave positive answers to the questions. According to the received answers, we can say that the didactic unit supposed something positive for them. Things as analyzing different songs, working with different lyrics and identifying different music styles, had a positive impact on them and taking their honest responses into account we can say that the unit had a really positive impact in their motivational constructs.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the influence that students' topic choice has in students' motivation towards the English language. The implementation of the didactic unit showed a rise in the motivational dimensions developed by Dornyei. The application of the unit based on students' topic choice received really positive effects in dimensions such as linguistic self- confidence, language learning attitudes and motivated learning behavior. Other dimensions such as parental encouragement or language use anxiety, also had positive effects, but these ones were almost undetectables.

On the other hand, regarding to the motivational dimensions based on other constructs, the study didn't reveal any clear effect. Together with this, analyzing the student's different motivational constructs showed that instrumental motivation for learning English was the primary source of these high school students. The implementation of the unit in this case, produced an ascent in the motivation, more related to some particular items than to general ones. Cultural interest related to students' personal reasons was also regarded as an important motive for the students. Working with the topic choice in this case, produced an ascent in the motivation related to this variable. In the last analyzed motivational variable, related to integrativeness, we couldn't observe any remarkable change; this means that students' topic choice according to the constructs mentioned above didn't let us make any clear conclusion.

The study findings can be used as a beginning point for providing some pedagogical implications that should be taken into consideration by both English instructors and syllabus designers. The implications are as follow:

- The study showed that high school students have in general terms a high motivation towards the English language. Being the variables of

instrumentality and cultural interest the most valued one by students, designing English courses more related to this kind of motivation would help them to follow and work in class in a better way.

- Seeing in general terms that working with a topic of students' choice has increase their motivation towards English, more questionnaires and research should be done in order to know how important is the topic choice impact in students' motivation.
- It is also necessary to underline the different utilitarian benefits that English language could have in students' future careers. This fact also could make students feel more motivated at the time of learning the English language.

To sum up, the current study has been conducted to identify the influence that topic choice produces in secondary school students' attitude towards the English language. The findings indicated that students motivation increased in general terms after implementing a didactic unit related to their topic choice. It should be said that studies like this one could help English teachers when designing new material for the English classes in order to make the class more adequate to students' interest, what could raise their motivation towards the language.

### Limitations

There were a number of limitations to the present study which should be highlighted so as to avoid any misinterpretations of the results. First, the researcher used all the amount of students that were available for him. All the students belonged to the same school. This means that they belonged socially to the same group, what makes the scope quite a homogeneous one.

The limitation of the scope to 33 students, made the researcher decide to develop the study without a control group. The establishment of a control group would have lessened the sample in a way that would have made impossible to take general conclusions. This fact would have made the results of the study really difficult to generalize. Nevertheless, we should say that the generalizations from the findings should be done with caution.

Apart from the motivational constructs we have analyzed, other motivational factors as the effects of having a new teacher or doing different activities that are new for them in English class could have an important role in order to raise students' motivational constructs. Also, we should bear in mind that students can be easily influenced at this age with the respective changes this possibility it could suppose for the study. Finally, we should remain that the pedagogical implications are limited to those which can be based on the participants' responses.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research presented here was completed as a project of the Master's degree in secondary education professorship. First, I would like to thank "Pedro de Atarrabia" high school and especially Ana Delgado for letting me implement the questionnaire and the didactic unit in her English classes. I would also like to thank the tutor of this project, Victoria Zenotz, who has helped me when it has been required.



## 8. REFERENCES

Al-Tamimi, A., & Shuib, M. (2009). Motivation and attitudes towards learning English: A study of petroleum engineering undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 9 (2), 29-55.

Cooper, R. L., & Fishman, J. A. (1977). A study of language attitudes. In J. A. Fishman, R. L. Cooper, & A. W. Conrad (Eds), *The spread of English* (pp.239-276). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Dictionary.com. 2014. [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. London: Longman.

Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gardner, R. (1983). Learning another language: A true social psychological experiment. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 2, 219-240.

Gardner, R. (1985) *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitude and motivation*. London: Edwards Arnold.

Kormos, J. and Csizér, K. (2008), Age-Related Differences in the Motivation of Learning English as a Foreign Language: Attitudes, Selves, and Motivated Learning Behavior. *Language Learning*, 58: 327–355.

Rubio, F. & Martinez, M. (2012), ¿Qué pasa en España con el inglés? Análisis de los factores que inciden en el éxito del aprendizaje. In M. Díez, R. Place, O. Fernández (Eds), *Plurilingualism. Promoting co-operation between communities, people and nations* (pp. 143-149). Bilbao : University of Deusto

Uribe, D. & Gutierrez, J. & Madrid, D. (2008). Las actitudes del alumnado hacia el aprendizaje del inglés como idioma extranjero: estudio de una muestra en el sur de España. *Porta Linguarium*, 10, 85-100.

Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *Modern Language Journal*, 86, 54-66.

Zenotz, V. (2012) Motivación en el aprendizaje de lenguas: estado de la cuestión. *Huarte de San Juan, Filología y didáctica de la lengua*, 12, 75-81.

ANNEXE I

CUESTIONARIO (PRE-TEST)

Edad:

Sexo:

1-Da una puntuación del 1 al 5 a cada frase, siendo 1 la puntuación mínima y 5 la puntuación máxima.

- Mi interés hacia la asignatura de inglés es \_\_\_\_\_
- Me gustaría aprender lenguas de otros países \_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que puedo aprender inglés con facilidad \_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que el aprender inglés es bueno para mi \_\_\_\_\_
- Mis padres, amigos o gente de mi alrededor me animan a estudiar inglés \_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que el saber inglés puede ayudarme mucho \_\_\_\_\_
- Con el tiempo creo que hablaré bien en inglés \_\_\_\_\_
- No me importa que no pueda hablar o comunicarme en inglés \_\_\_\_\_
- Mi interés hacia la lengua inglesa es \_\_\_\_\_

2- Redondea la respuesta adecuada

Me siento incómodo cuando hablo en inglés

Siempre      Casi siempre      A veces      Casi nunca      Nunca

- Me avergüenza hablar en inglés delante del resto de la clase

Siempre      Casi siempre      A veces      Casi nunca      Nunca

3-¿ Por qué estudias inglés? ( anota las opciones que quieras y marcalas con una x)

a) \_\_\_\_ Me interesa conocer la cultura de otros países de habla inglesa ( EEUU, Inglaterra...)

b) \_\_\_\_ Me gusta el idioma inglés

c) \_\_\_\_ Puedo entender canciones, películas, libros...

d) \_\_\_\_ Me interesa aprender un segundo idioma

e) \_\_\_\_ Me obligan en el instituto

f) \_\_\_\_ Si de mi dependiese no lo aprendería

g) \_\_\_\_ Podré comunicarme con gente de otros lados del mundo

h) \_\_\_\_ Creo que en el futuro será útil para mi

4- Responde a las siguientes preguntas:

-¿ Qué temas de tu interés te gustaría trabajar en las clases de inglés? ( temas relacionados a tus aficiones, gustos, actualidad...)

-¿ Crees que el aprender cosas de tu interés en inglés aumentaría tu interés por la asignatura? ¿Por qué?

ANNEXE II

CUESTIONARIO (POST-TEST)

Edad:

Sexo:

1-Da una puntuación del 1 al 5 a cada frase según lo de acuerdo que estés con ella, siendo 1 la puntuación mínima y 5 la puntuación máxima.

<b>Totalmente en desacuerdo</b>	<b>Parcialmente en desacuerdo</b>	<b>Neutro</b>	<b>Parcialmente de acuerdo</b>	<b>Totalmente de acuerdo</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Totally disagree</b>	Partially disagree	Neutral	Partially agree	Totally agree

- Mi interés hacia la asignatura de inglés es muy alto \_\_\_\_\_
- Me gustaría aprender lenguas de otros países\_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que puedo aprender inglés con facilidad \_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que el aprender inglés es bueno para mi \_\_\_\_\_
- Mis padres, amigos o gente de mi alrededor me animan a estudiar inglés\_\_\_\_\_
- Creo que el saber inglés puede ayudarme mucho\_\_\_\_\_
- Con el tiempo creo que hablaré bien en inglés\_\_\_\_\_
- No me importa que no pueda hablar o comunicarme en inglés\_\_\_\_\_
- Mi interés hacia la lengua inglesa es muy alto \_\_\_\_\_

2- Redondea la respuesta adecuada

Me siento incómodo cuando hablo en inglés

Siempre      Casi siempre      A veces      Casi nunca      Nunca

- Me avergüenza hablar en inglés delante del resto de la clase

Siempre      Casi siempre      A veces      Casi nunca      Nunca

3-¿ Por qué estudias inglés? ( anota las opciones que quieras y márcalas con una x)

a) \_\_\_\_\_ Me interesa conocer la cultura de otros países de habla inglesa ( EEUU, Inglaterra...)

b)\_\_\_\_\_ Me gusta el idioma inglés

c)\_\_\_\_\_ Puedo entender canciones, películas, libros...

d)\_\_\_\_\_ Me interesa aprender un segundo idioma

e)\_\_\_\_\_ Me obligan en el instituto

f)\_\_\_\_\_ Si de mi dependiese no lo aprendería

g)\_\_\_\_\_ Podré comunicarme con gente de otros lados del mundo

h) \_\_\_\_\_ Creo que en el futuro será útil para mí

4-Responde a las siguientes preguntas:

-¿ Crees que el estudiar cosas como la música en inglés, y el analizar diferentes canciones hace que tu interés hacia el inglés aumente? ¿Por qué?

-La unidad " music experience" me ha gustado ( Redondea la opción que más deseas):

-Totalmente de acuerdo      - Parcialmente de acuerdo      - Neutro

-Parcialmente en desacuerdo      - Totalmente en desacuerdo

## MUSIC EXPERIENCE

### GUIDELINE

#### VOCABULARY

- Music styles
- Members of a music band

#### GRAMMAR

- Review of tenses
  - Past Simple
  - Present Simple
  - "be going to"
- Comparatives and superlatives

#### LISTENING

- Listen to a song and fill in the gaps

#### READING

- Read a text and answer the questions

#### WRITING

- Write a text related to your favourite group.

#### OBJECTIVES

1 SESSION: To learn vocabulary related to music.

2 SESSION: To read a text and answer questions related to the text

3 SESSION: To compare different bands/groups.

4 SESSION: To write a composition about your favourite music group and compare it to one of a different style.

## SESSION 1

### VOCABULARY

a) Complete each arrow with the corresponding role:





b) Write the different music styles and roles of the musicians that appear in these photos. You also need to write a sentence expressing your musical taste.

1- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/ don't like:



2- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/Don't like:



3- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/ Don't like:



4- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/Don't like:



5- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/Don't like:



6- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/Don't like:



7- Music style:  
Role:  
Like/Don't like:



## SESSION 2

### READING

#### **BACKSTREET BOYS**

High school friends A.J. McLean and Howie Dorough met Nick Carter in Orlando (USA). It was a bit later when Kevin Richardson who was singing in shows at Disney World, joined them. Richardson got his cousin Brian Littrell, with whom he used to sing when they were young. The five formed a vocal harmony group and named themselves Backstreet Boys, using the name of an Orlando market. They started performing around local malls, theme parks, and schools, with Carter, Littrell, and McLean emerging as the main lead singers.



Their first single, "We've Got It Goin' On" (1995) didn't have so much success in America. The song did a lot better everywhere else, selling over 11 million copies and launching the group's career.

#### **ANGUS YOUNG**



Angus Young ( born 31 March 1955) is a Scottish-born Australian musician, and the lead guitarist, songwriter and co-founder of the rock and roll band AC/DC. He is considered one of the best and most charismatic guitarist in the world. He usually performs in a schoolboy-uniform .

AC/DC have remained together since their formation in 1974 and have released 15 studio albums. The band have sold over 200 million albums worldwide. Their 1980 studio album *Back in Black* is the second all time highest-selling album worldwide.

#### **COLDPLAY**

Coldplay are a British rock band formed in 1996 by lead vocalist Chris Martin and lead guitarist Jonny Buckland. After they formed under the name *Pectoralz*, Guy Berriman joined the group as a bassist and they changed their name to *Starfish*. Will Champion joined as a drummer and backing vocalist, completing the band. Manager Phil Harvey is often considered an unofficial 5th member. The band renamed *Coldplay* in 1998, preserving the name until today.



#### READING QUESTIONS

- 1- What fact do these three groups have in common?
- 2- Which is the most successful of the three groups described above? Why?
- 3- Which of the three groups is an American group? How do you know?
- 4- What is the role of Angus Young in AC/DC?
- 5- How many members are there in the band Coldplay? Describe their roles in the group.
- 6- In what year did Backstreet Boy's career start being successful?
- 7- Listen to 3 music extracts. Match each song with its corresponding group.
  - 1-
  - 2-
  - 3-

SESSION 3

LISTENING

a) Listen to the song and fill in the gaps.

I WANT IT THAT WAY

Useful information:

"I Want It That Way" is a song by American boy band Backstreet Boys. This song was the most important single in their third album, Millennium (1999). The pop ballad talks about a relationship that has problems because of emotional or physical distance.

It was the number one in more than 25 countries including Austria, Canada, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The song:

Yeah

You are my \_\_\_\_  
The one desire  
Believe \_\_\_\_ I say  
I want it that way

But we are two \_\_\_\_\_ apart  
Can't reach to your heart  
When you \_\_\_\_\_  
That I want it that way

[Chorus:]

Tell me \_\_\_\_  
Ain't nothin' but a heartache  
Tell me \_\_\_\_\_  
Ain't nothin' but a \_\_\_\_\_  
Tell me \_\_\_\_  
I never wanna hear you say  
I want it that way

Am I your \_\_\_\_

Your one desire  
Yes I know it's too \_\_\_\_  
But I want it that way

[Chorus]

Now I can \_\_\_\_ that we're fallen apart  
From the way that it used to be, \_\_\_\_  
No matter the distance  
I want you to know  
That deep down inside of \_\_\_\_...

You are my \_\_\_\_  
The one desire  
You are  
You are, you \_\_\_\_, you are

Don't wanna hear you \_\_\_\_  
Ain't nothin' but a heartache  
Ain't nothin' but a \_\_\_\_  
(Don't wanna hear you say)  
I never wanna hear you \_\_\_\_  
(Oh yeah)  
I want it that way

Tell me \_\_\_\_  
Ain't nothin' but a heartache  
Tell me \_\_\_\_  
Ain't nothin but a \_\_\_\_  
Tell me \_\_\_\_  
I never wanna hear you \_\_\_\_  
I want it that way  
(Tell me \_\_\_\_)  
Ain't nothin But a heartache  
Ain't nothin but a mistake  
Tell me \_\_\_\_  
I never want to hear you say  
I want it that way  
Cause I want it that way

## GRAMMAR

	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Comparative</i>	<i>Superlative</i>
<i>One syllable adjectives</i>	<i>Old Safe Big Hot</i>	<i>Older Safer Bigger Hotter</i>	<i>The oldest The safest The biggest The hottest</i>
<i>Adjectives ending in y</i>	<i>Noisy Dirty</i>	<i>Noisier Dirtier</i>	<i>The noisiest The dirtiest</i>
<i>Adjectives with two or more syllables</i>	<i>Boring Beautiful</i>	<i>More boring More beautiful</i>	<i>The most boring The most beautiful</i>
<i>Irregular adjectives</i>	<i>Good Bad Far</i>	<i>Better Worse Farther</i>	<i>The best The worst The farthest</i>

a) Add the comparative and superlative forms of the next adjectives:

- Interesting      -serious      -easy  
                                 -busy



-safe

b) Complete the sentences about Mick Jagger and Justin Bieber. Use the comparative adjectives.

Mick Jagger and Justin  
form of different



1-Mick is ..... than Justin. Mick is 70 year old.

2- Justin is ..... than Mick. Justin is 1,70m tall.

3-Mick is ..... than Justin. Mick always wears a suit.

4- Mick composes ..... music than Justin. Mick's music rules.

5-

c) Write two sentences using the comparative or the superlative for each group of words.

1- Pop/ rock/ jazz ( bad)

2- Rihanna / Michael Jackson / One direction ( good)

3- Rock/ classical music/ jazz ( boring)

SESSION 4

### WRITING

Write a composition about your favourite English speaking band.

- Include 4 paragraphs
  
- Write about:
  - Their beginnings.
  - Their situation now.
  - Their future plans.
  - You need to compare your group with another one that belongs to a different music style.
  
- Draw and write a Writing Organizer before you start your composition.
- Use linking words
  - and, but, because, so.
  - because of, although.
  - then, after, before, that, \_\_\_ ago.