

# Exchange period as a motivating factor in business students' ideal L2 self development - or not?

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Vaikka motivaatio englannin oppimisessa on vuosikymmeniä ollut yksi soveltavan kielitieteen keskeisimpiä tutkimuskohteita, on mahdollisia muutoksia opiskelijoiden motivaatiossa vaihto-opiskelun aikana ja vaikutuksia tulevaisuuden minäkuviin englannin kielen käyttäjänä tutkittu suomalaisessa kontekstissa vain vähän. Opiskelijavaihto ulkomaisessa yliopistossa houkuttelee kansainvälistymisen ja kielitaidon parantamisen takia yhä useampia kauppatieteiden opiskelijoita, sillä englannin osaaminen on nykypäivän globaalien markkinoiden ja kansainvälisen kaupan takia heille ensisijaisen tärkeää.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni tarkoituksena on selvittää mahdollisen vaihto-opiskelun vaikutuksia sekä kauppatieteiden opiskelijoiden englannin oppimisen motivaatioon että heidän tulevaisuuden kuviinsa itsestään ideaalina kielen käyttäjänä. Tavoitteena oli selvittää myös syitä liittyen vaihtoon lähtemiseen ja/tai lähtemättä jättämiseen. Teoriapohjana käytin Zóltan Dörnyein teoriaa, joka koostuu oppijoiden aiemmista kokemuksista kielen oppimisessa ja tulevaisuuden minäkuvista kielen käyttäjänä (<i>L2 motivational self-system</i>). Kyseistä teoriaa ei ole laajalti käytetty suomalaisessa kontekstissa, saati rajattuna kauppatieteiden opiskelijoihin.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin vertailevana laadullisena tutkimuksena haastattelujen avulla. Haastattelin neljää 23-24 vuotiasta kauppatieteiden opiskelijaa Jyväskylän yliopistosta, joista kaksi oli lähdössä vaihtoon englanninkieliseen maahan, ja toiset kaksi olivat päättäneet olla lähtemättä vaihtoon. Vastausten analysointi toteutettiin sisällönanalyysin keinoin. Tulokset osoittivat, että vaikka syyt vaihtoon lähtemiseen/lähtemättä jättämiseen vaihtelivat, oli kielen oppimisella iso rooli tässä päätöksessä. Motivaatio kielen oppimiseen oli näin ollen myös yksi tekijä päätöksessä. Opiskelijoiden tulevaisuuden minäkuvat kielen käyttäjänä olivat yhteydessä kielen oppimisen motivaatioon, ja aiemmilla kokemuksilla kielen oppimisesta oli myös merkittävä rooli nykyisessä kielen oppimisen motivaatiossa.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The role of English in today's global world is undeniable. Thus, learning it has become more important than ever and language learning motivation has interested applied linguists to a great extent. No wonder, because as Dörnyei (2014: 520) states, "the learner's ultimate success always depends on the level of motivation". Language learning is always a choice, and if the learner does not want to make this choice, proficiency in a language cannot be achieved. Dörnyei (2005, 2009) has introduced a new theory which combines psychological and pedagogical approaches in language learning motivation research and focuses on learner vision. This L2 motivational self-system functions as the theoretical framework for this study.

Even though motivation has been studied widely and Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system has been applied to many cases, business students have not been a target group, at least not in the Finnish context. Researching business students' motivation to learn English is essential in order to be able to provide tools to enhance their language learning motivation even more in the future. Knowing English has become essential in their field of study, since globalization has made business an international phenomenon. Thus, international connections have become a norm even in Finnish companies, and employees are expected to have good English skills. Moreover, most of the materials in business schools are in English, and even some of the courses are held completely in English. English is present in business students' everyday lives, which makes studying their attitudes towards it and motivation to learn it interesting.

The present study aims to find out whether a possible exchange period affects business students' motivation to study English, and to what extent English is present in their future ideals (i.e. ideal selves). Additionally, past experiences in learning English and their possible effect on future motivation and ideal selves are considered in the study. All these points build on Dörnyei's theory, which will be presented in chapter 2. In that chapter, the major developments in motivation research will be explained and some previous studies on Dörnyei's theory reviewed. In chapter 3, I move on to introduce the methodological choices and data. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings and finally, in chapter 5 the findings and future implications regarding this topic and its importance will be discussed in more detail.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Motivation has been studied from various points of views in L2 learning, and more specifically in learning English. Various theories have also been developed over the decades, for example, the integrative orientation model by Gardner and Lambert (1972: 12, cited in Ushioda and Dörnyei 2009: 2), which has also received probably most attention in the whole area of motivation research in L2 learning. Dissatisfaction with Gardner's integrative model motivated Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009: 22) to introduce a new theory called *L2 Motivational Self-System*, which underlines the link between motivation and identity and thus links the mainstream motivational and educational psychology. The L2 motivational self-system is the most recent theory on the field, moves above the integrative theory and has proved to be credible. Thus, it serves as the theoretical framework of the present study. Below I am going to describe some of the basic concepts and developments of motivation research, and introduce Dörnyei's theory in more detail.

### 2.1 Motivation

The term *motivation* originates from the Latin verb *movere*, 'to move'. Motivation moves one to engage in action and to make certain choices (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 3). It is a complex, much researched issue, and researchers rarely agree on its different facets. One thing that they do agree on, however, is that motivation requires a choice, effort and persistence (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 4). For example, a person decides to learn a certain language, English. He/She participates in English language classes every week for two years, and so achieves a certain level of competence. The driving force before this choice (to learn English) was motivation, and more specifically L2 motivation. Dörnyei and Otto (1998: 65, cited in Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 6) define L2 motivation as follows:

In a general sense, motivation can be defined as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out.

Thus, motivation is seen as a dynamic mental process. It is not stable but contains ups and downs, and can change even in a short period of time. Motivation is also highly individual. One way to look at motivation is to consider motivated individuals and the features they display. Gardner (2005, as quoted in Vakkari 2013: 5) suggests that motivated individuals have goals and desires, apply appropriate strategies to help to achieve their goals, show persistence and have reasons for their behaviour. Its importance for language learning is, as Dörnyei (2015: 72) states, inevitable. Without sufficient motivation, individuals are not able to keep up the required effort in order to achieve their goals, which in this case would be learning a new language.

As previously mentioned, motivation research is a well established field of research and the issue has been studied widely, and it has also developed reasonably during the past five decades. New, more relevant theories have been launched during different eras of motivation research, and old theories have been revised to offer more relevant material within each era. In the next section, I will briefly introduce the three main eras that have shaped the nature of motivation research.

## **2.2 Main developments in motivation research**

According to Dörnyei (2015: 73), the development of motivation studies can be divided into three different stages: The social-psychological period, The cognitive-situated period and The process-oriented period. The first period took place approximately 1959-1990. It was characterised by the work of Canadian professors, Robert Gardner being the most widely known of them all. Gardner (1985) introduced two concepts of motivation: integrative and instrumental, which together combine the socio-educational model. *Integrative* motivation puts emphasis on the interactive, social nature of a language, and refers to the learner's wish to be able to communicate in the target language. *Instrumental* motivation in contrast refers to the learner viewing the target language as an instrument for e.g. getting a better job or higher salary. This model was, however, strongly criticised by a number of researches, for example, Dörnyei (e.g. 2009, 2015), because of the concept of integrativeness and its definition.

Problems with the socio-educational model and the growing desire in the 1990s to import some of the most influential, completely cognitive motivational concepts, into the L2 motivation research motivated the emergence of the new approaches into the area of L2 motivation research (Dörnyei 2015: 80). The perspective of motivation research widened and more situated analyses, mostly in classroom contexts, were adopted. Dörnyei (2015: 81) puts emphasis on the self-determination theory introduced by Deci and Ryan, which focuses on the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, regarding it as one the most influential theory of its time. Also, the study of ‘the self’ (e.g. self-confidence, self-regulation) and the situation-specific motives relate strongly to the cognitive-situated period.

New, socio-dynamic approaches that took place from the beginning of the 21st century till today highlight the dynamic character of motivation and its temporal variation. As Dörnyei (2015: 84) states, from this point of view motivation is expected to go through diverse stages and should thus be regarded as a dynamic factor which is adapted to the ongoing situation. During this (still ongoing) process-oriented era, Dörnyei introduced a new motivational system which has its roots in the earlier period and in the conceptualisation of the ‘self’. According to Dörnyei (2015: 86) himself, this system was, and perhaps still is, the “most influential self-specific motivation construct in SLA”. This theory also serves as the theoretical framework in the present study, and I am going to introduce it more thoroughly below.

### **2.3 L2 Motivational self-system**

The L2 Motivational self-system is one of the most recent theories in the field of motivation research. Previous theories, especially the integrative model by Gardner, has been criticised for its theoretical content and for not offering any obvious links with the new cognitive motivational concepts (Dörnyei 2009: 10). The new theory, L2 motivational self-system by Dörnyei, which combines motivational research with psychology, was introduced in order to compensate for these weaknesses. According to Dörnyei (2009), his two main sources of inspiration were the growing dissatisfaction with the concept of integrativeness and the

theoretical advances in psychology in the study of the self. The system consists of the following three components:

1. Ideal self — the person one would like to become, ‘ideal L2 self’ in terms of what kind of a language speaker/user the person would like to become
2. Ought to L2 self — the attributes one believes to possess in order to avoid negative outcome and to meet expectations
3. L2 learning experience — the impact of the immediate learning experience (e.g. curriculum, teacher, peer group, success)

Thus, this model suggests that there are three main sources of motivation. First of all, the learner wants to become a successful language user, i.e. his/her internal desire. Secondly, the learner wants to meet the expectations of others, i.e. the social pressure coming from the surrounding environment, and thirdly, the actual process of language learning (immediate learning experience). Dörnyei (2009: 27) presents the Ideal L2 self as the central theme of this theory, and puts specific emphasis on vision. One has to create a vision of him/herself as an effective language speaker (ideal self) and to aim towards this vision in order to successfully master a language. The other two components shape the vision and complement the road to success (or possible failure). In the next subsection, I am going to discuss the reasons behind my choice of the theoretical framework and point out the research gap in this particular area of motivation research by reviewing some previously conducted studies.

#### **2.4 Recent previous studies on L2 motivational self-system**

Magid (2013) conducted a study in Singapore, aiming to find out whether enhancing pupils’ vision of their ideal L2 self increases their motivation and effort in learning English. The participants were 16 grade-five elementary school pupils, ages ranging from 10 to 13. Data was collected by means of three questionnaires, with closed items as well as open-ended questions that were administered in different stages of a four-month workshop program (eight workshops altogether), and a group interview that was conducted after the last workshop. What was found out from the questionnaires was that 90% of the participants became more motivated to learn English during the program. Moreover, the open-ended questions and the



group interview strengthened this finding. The pupils became more excited to learn English and put more effort into it, and also realized the importance of English in the future, which increased their motivation and helped them to aim towards more comprehensible goals.

Another study by Khan (2015) investigated the relationship between L2 motivational selves and L2 achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL) from a Saudi perspective. The study was conducted in a university in Jeddah in a mixed method manner (both qualitative and quantitative methods were used). For the quantitative part, 100 female participants answered a questionnaire, which was based on Dörnyei's theory (see section 2.3), consisting of 35 items. For the qualitative part, semi-structured interviews were conducted on 10 randomly selected female participants. According to the results, the ideal self was found to have a highly significant impact on the students' achievement. Ought to-self, in contrast, did not play a vital role in the process of EFL learning. Attitude towards EFL learning was the most significant factor in terms of achieving good grades, and a clear, positive future image (ideal self) resulted in a positive attitude, motivating students in learning EFL.

Based on these more recent studies, understanding the role of ideal self in learning English seems significantly beneficial. Even if Dörnyei's theory, and research based on it, is still rather new in the field of motivation research, it can be argued that the L2 motivational selves play a major role in students' motivation. Thus, it was appropriate to use this theory as the theoretical framework in my study, as one of my main goals is to be able to provide information on how business students' motivation to learn English could be increased in the future. What is more, this theory has not been widely implemented in the Finnish context, especially in business schools, which adds to the relevance of my study. Business students' English language skills are somewhat vital for their future careers, which is why I chose them as my group of interest.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I will introduce the aim of the present study and the research questions. I will then move on to motivate the choice of methodology - who was involved, how the data was

collected and finally, how it was analysed.

### **3.1 Aims of the study**

The aim of the present study is to discover whether the motivation to study English among business students differs between those that chose to go on exchange (to an English-speaking country) and those that chose not to go on exchange at all. The study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of the possible exchange period in the business students' motivation to learn English? Do the students' motivation differ between the ones who are going on exchange and the ones that are not?
2. Does the possible exchange period affect the students' future self-image as a language user?
  - a. How is English related to the students' future images?
  - b. How do past experiences in learning English relate to the students' future image?

I aim to answer these questions by analysing the interviews that were conducted for this study. In the interviews, the interviewees reflected on their personal relationship to English, and discussed their previous experiences of learning English. Judging by these answers, I will draw conclusions regarding the questions presented above. In the next sections, the data and its collection and analysis processes are discussed more thoroughly.

### **3.2 Data collection**

In this section, I am going to discuss the reasons for my data collection choices and the whole process itself. First, I will introduce the participants of the study in more detail, and in the second section I am going to explain the interviews and the theory that motivated my choice of data collection.

#### **3.2.1 Participants**

I interviewed four business students from the University of Jyväskylä, two of whom had decided to go on exchange (one going to Canada, the other to the United States of America) and another two who had decided not to go on exchange at all. The names of the interviewees are completely fictitious in order to protect their anonymity. Juuso (male, age 23, 3rd year student) has decided to go on exchange to Canada and studies leadership and management as his major. Niina (female, age 24, 5th year student) has marketing as her major and is going on exchange to the United States of America. Saara (female, age 24, 5th year student) studies leadership and management as her major and Milla (female, age 23, 3rd year student) is majoring in economics. Neither of them wanted to go on exchange. The reasons for these decisions will be discussed later. Permissions to use the interviews for this study were asked from all of the participants, and they all agreed on the terms.

### **3.2.2 Interviews**

My choice of data collection method was *semi-structured interviews*. According to Dufva (2011: 132), getting participants' voices heard is one of the advantages of interviews as a way of collecting data for a study. This is one reason behind my choice of methodology — being able to get deeper, individual-based insights into the topics, since interviews allow participants to reflect on their thoughts and views of the matter more deeply and in greater detail, and as Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 73) note, are also a flexible way of conducting a study where the possibility for misunderstandings is minimized. Moreover, the topic of this study varies within different individuals and is thus hard to generalize in a quantitative way among large groups. There are also only a few business students going on an exchange to an English-speaking country, because there are not many spots available in the partner universities overseas. This makes it hard to find many interviewees.

The interviews (see Appendix 1) were semi-structured ones and they were conducted individually. A semi-structured interview consists of pre-determined themes and open questions which allow the interviewees to add their own comments, and the interview to take new, unexpected turns (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 75). Since I had no hypotheses about the topic of this study and wanted to gather individual experiences and opinions, a

semi-structured interview was the best option for my study. The questions were designed and divided into three categories according to Dörnyei's theory of L2 motivational self-system (2009: 29) and its three main points: ideal self, ought-to self and learning experiences. The discussion built on these questions, but the interviewees added their own points and in the end the discussions became more extensive. The length of the interviews varied from 20 to 30 minutes. All of the interviews were carried out in Finnish, because I wanted to make sure that the participants could fully express themselves without any confusion over the right terminology in English. The interviews were carried out and transcribed in December 2016. The analysis process and its methods are discussed in the next subsection.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

For transcribing I used the rough transcription conventions introduced by Alanen (2006: 222, as quoted by Dufva 2011: 145), because my interest was in content and not in the small details. The data was then subjected to content analysis based on Tuomi and Sarajärvi's book (2009: 103), where they argue that content analysis aims to describe the data collected and the issue it addresses in a general and summarised manner. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 108-120) present three types of content analysis: *data-based*, *theory driven* and *theory-based content analysis*. My choice was theory driven content analysis, because my study draws on Dörnyei's theory. The analysis process can be divided into three stages: reducing the data, clustering it and abstracting it. Based on these stages, the transcribed data was first analysed critically and reduced to an extent that was relevant for this study. Next, the remaining data was grouped into the three categories presented in Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system model (for details, see section 2.3). Finally I was able to draw conclusions about the motivational issues addressed as research questions in this study. The findings will be discussed in the next section.

## **4 FINDINGS**

In this chapter, I am going to report the results of my study and provide answers to my research questions. Based on content analysis, findings are reported regarding three themes

that emerged from the pool of data collected: reasons for going on exchange/not going, the role of the possible exchange in the students' motivation to learn English and future images related to English. The last subcategory is divided into three sections, following Dörnyei's model (see section 2.3) and aiming to answer my second research question accordingly (see section 3.1). Examples from the data that are presented in the findings have been translated from Finnish to English. The original examples can be found in Appendix 3.

#### **4.1 Reasons for not going on exchange vs. going**

Saara and Milla who had decided not to go on exchange shared multiple reasons for their choice. One reason was that exchange was not worth the time or effort. Saara had already done an internship in Singapore in 2014, and she felt it was much more useful than doing a university exchange as she wanted to improve her language competence (see example 1):

##### Example 1

(internship) is much more useful because there you need to use the language differently... the language that you use in working life, you will only learn it when you put yourself into that position and actually use it. And that is why my internship was so beneficial.

Another reason why Saara did not want to go was the feeling that exchange would be more partying and less beneficial for studies. Moreover, she felt that university courses and materials provided good enough sources for English and that there were other ways of improving her language skills than just exchange.

Language barrier was mentioned by Milla as a reason not to go on exchange, and she saw it as her biggest hindrance. She felt that her English skills were not good enough in order to be able to complete courses abroad. Her major, economics, had to do with this, since she felt the courses had been hard enough in Finnish, and the idea of not having any mother-tongue support frightened her (see example 2):

##### Example 2

and maybe the biggest reason was that. That these courses are very hard. Like even here in Finland even though you can brainstorm in Finnish with your friends and stuff ... so I think I'm not sure I could pass the courses because the courses in economics are very tough.

Moreover, stress, anxiousness and shyness were important factors for Milla, because she considered herself not being the kind of person who would enjoy an exchange. Stress was the main factor for her as can be seen from example 3:

#### Example 3

I'm prone to stress anyway. Like about school and everything so I thought that I did not want any additional stress about an exchange and so it was just easier to not go.

Economical situation was yet another reason for not to go as she wanted to put the money into travelling rather than exchange. She also felt she could get the same experiences from travelling, and see more of the world than what she would experience during an exchange.

In contrast, Juuso and Niina had decided to go on exchange, and it turned out that there were a number of shared reasons why. One reason was competence in English, as both of them wished to improve their language skills during their exchange periods and to achieve fluency in speaking and understanding. English felt important to Juuso, who had even considered going to a Spanish-speaking country (see example 4).

#### Example 4

I could have gone to a Spanish-speaking country since I have started to learn Spanish here but then I thought like I want my English competence to reach the level where I do not have to stress about it at all

Another shared reason was the experience itself and everything they hoped to experience while living in another country. Getting new friends and familiarizing oneself with a new culture were related to these experiences. Moreover, university exchange felt like a one-time experience that should not be wasted. They felt they were going to regret not using the opportunity, and had heard so many good things about an exchange period from their friends that they wanted to experience it themselves, as Niina commented on (see example 5):

#### Example 5

I know that I would regret not going ... everyone have been recommending an exchange so like. I do not want to miss out

Additionally, networking was mentioned as a reason by Juuso, as he hoped that it would be helpful in his future job. One reason was also growing as a person: Niina hoped that she would learn something more of herself during her exchange.

#### **4.2 Role of the possible exchange in students' motivation to learn English**

Motivation to study and learn English was high with both Niina and Juuso who had decided to go on exchange. Language played a great role in their choice of an exchange destination, and they both wished to achieve fluency in English. Juuso (see example 4 above) talked about achieving such fluency in English that he would not have to stress about using it at all, and Niina mentioned the same kind of fluency as can be seen from example 6:

##### Example 6

I want it (English) to be like. One language to be fluent alongside Finnish.

Informal learning was noted by both of the participants. They wanted to reach the level where communicating in English would happen quite effortlessly, and thought that exchange, where one is surrounded by the language all the time, would be a great way of achieving this competence. As Juuso mentioned (see example 7), language learning was thought to happen informally, when they would start to live a normal life in an English-speaking country:

##### Example 7

This exchange is good because at least I think that the language is learned quite unnoticed that it is not like now you study English but like. It follows

Even Saara who had not wanted to go on exchange had great motivation to study English because of her future job preferences in an international company. She mentioned informal learning as well (see example 8):

##### Example 8

I absolutely want to improve it (English) and I think that when I will start to work, hopefully in an international environment, it will improve even in a couple of months when you just get to talk

In contrast, Milla was quite reluctant to study English. This affected her decision not to go on exchange (see example 2 above), but even studying English in the Finnish context was not something she had enjoyed and would have liked to do (see example 9):

#### Example 9

I just always thought about the Friday morning class (English class) like oh my here comes the two-hour torture again

The reason for her reluctance to study English and her low motivation was the feeling that she was bad at it, as is evident from example 10:

#### Example 10

So I have not enjoyed studying English that much mainly because I have always been so bad at it I mean who likes to study something that you are bad at

Thus, judging by Juuso and Niina's answers, an exchange period played a positive role in the students' motivation to study English. However, motivation differed to a great extent even between Saara and Milla, both of whom did not go on exchange. Past experiences, which I am going to report below, explained some of the variation.

### **4.3 Future images concerning English**

This final subsection aims to answer research question number two (see section 3.1). The subsections below have been organized accordingly, and are based on Dörnyei's model (see section 2.3).

#### **4.3.1 Ought to-selves**

All of the participants noted the importance of English in their field of study. They had also clear ideas about the expectations of the level of proficiency required in their future jobs, as Saara demonstrates in example 11:

#### Example 11

for sure they (future employers) are expecting like ... fluent skills in Finnish and English, like both spoken and written ... You need to know the he business language (English) or



otherwise you will not manage

Juuso had similar views (see example 12), and he was clearly aware of the expectations of the university and the future employers:

#### Example 12

You need to know English here (in university) if you want to manage, and anyway our field is the kind where you have to know English if you want to like get a job

Even though Saara, Niina and Juuso all agreed on the expectations that others (university, future employers) have of them, they all had a positive mindset on the issue and none of them brought up any fears or obstacles that these expectations might have caused. They were somewhat confident about their skills and had a strong belief that they would manage to work with English in the future, as becomes evident from Juuso's comments in example 13:

#### Example 13

I have a pretty solid trust on my progress and on how I have developed it (English) quite a lot already ... so yes I think I will manage I am not afraid of that

Milla, in contrast, was afraid of the future expectations regarding her language skills, which also affected her future plans, as she notes in example 14:

#### Example 14

yes I am nervous ... if someone who has otherwise the same skills but is better at languages than me gets picked for the job I am applying for because I am not good enough so that is what stresses me ... So I have been thinking about applying for a post where you would not need to use it (English) a lot

### 4.3.2 Ideal selves

Juuso and Saara had clear visions and hopes about working in an international environment, and thus their L2 ideal selves were people with fluent English. They did not necessarily want to move abroad, but rather work for an international company in Finland and settle here, as Juuso mentioned in example 15:

### Example 15

Well yes I think it (internationalization) is a very important part of my future ... Even though I would settle in Finland. In Finland there are many companies that run in English as well

Saara agreed on internationalizing in Finland, but wished to be able to work abroad for a period of time. English was very strongly present in her future ideal self, as can be seen from example 16:

### Example 16

My dream is to be able to work in Finland for a little while, then work abroad to work there for a couple of years and then come back to Finland ... (My ideal workplace) is where the working language would be English

They both had strong motivation to improve their language skills in order to reach their goals, and also counted on informal learning and learning when using the language in a real work-life context.

Niina talked about working internationally as well, but her goals were not as clearly pointed towards an international working environment since she was overall not quite sure about her future preferences. However, she recognized the role of English in her future ideal self and was sure that it was going to be a part of it no matter what (see example 17):

### Example 17

And for sure you will use it (English) like wherever you are because. Like wherever you work. You will use it for sure.

Milla talked also about English as a part of her future, but it was more like a dream than a goal for her. She mentioned London as one of her favourite cities, and dreamed about working there someday. However, her fears and scepticism about her own language competence hindered her (see example 18):

### Example 18

I have always said to everyone that if I was very good at English I would move there like immediately for a little while but it is like. What is stopping me is that I do not trust that I am good enough so that I could work abroad.

Overall, English was a part of all the participants' future ideals, at least to some extent. Juuso, Niina and Saara were all sure about English being a big part of their future work, and they saw achieving a certain competence more as a goal than a dream. Milla, in contrast, regarded good competence in English as more like a dream than a goal, and was even afraid of using it in the future.

### 4.3.3 Effect of past experiences

As mentioned above, past experiences in learning English played a great role in the participants' motivation to study English. Niina and Saara recalled English having a special role in their childhood, as can be noted from the following examples (19, 20):

#### Example 19 (Niina)

I have actually always liked it ... we were huge Harry Potter fans and learned all like or read all the lines and stuff and from that kind of things I have learned really well

#### Example 20 (Saara)

Yes! Yes (answer to a question "have you liked studying English?") Actually I started learning English when I was seven<sup>1</sup> ... I went to like a special language class so it started earlier

Juuso had also liked learning English, but recalled that he did not really put effort into studying in high school so his English grades dropped dramatically. He then got a grip of it again in the university, and started improving his language skills (see example 21):

#### Example 21

so my grades dropped like really much between elementary school and high school and now (in the university) I have had to like learn it again ... I think that I have improved like a lot now in my 20s

All three had positive experiences in learning English and did not mention any teachers with bad influence or other negative experiences. Thus, their motivation to study it had been high throughout the years. Milla's experience, in contrast, was quite the opposite as can be noted from example 22:

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<sup>1</sup> As a rule, children in Finland start to learn English at the age of 9.

## Example 22

my teacher in the lower secondary school did not know English well. So it did not really work and after that I have not enjoyed English at all since I did not learn it from the beginning as the teacher was so bad

Because Milla's experiences with English had been negative, and the learning process had not begun as hoped, the effect on her future motivation to study English and languages overall was quite negative. She felt she was not good enough and is still not confident in using English even in the Finnish context. I am going to discuss the impact that this had on her future language learning motivation and success, as well as any issues with the other three participants and their language learning motivation, further in the following chapter.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, my goal was to find out whether a possible exchange period affects business students' motivation to learn English, and more specifically, how it might affect their future ideal self image as a language user. I interviewed four business students, and the results made it clear that there is indeed a difference between those who are going on exchange and those who have chosen not to. However, this difference was not very consistent and it was affected also by issues other than the decision to go or not to go. On the one hand, Milla regarded the previous negative experiences in learning English as the major reason why her motivation to study it had not been very high (see example 22 above). She mentioned also factors such as personality, money and other preferences that strengthened her decision about not to go on exchange. These factors (personality excluded) have quite little to do with language learning motivation. On the other hand, Saara was not going on exchange either but her motivation to learn English was at least as high, if not higher, as with Juuso and Niina who were going on exchange. She had had positive experiences in learning English, and regarded it as a highly important tool for business students in their future jobs.

As already mentioned above, the motivation to study English did not differ much between Niina, Juuso and Saara. They all had had positive experiences in learning English, and this surely had an effect on their motivation. Juuso and Niina were going on exchange, and they

both hoped to acquire better competence in English, but more as a side effect than by actually studying it. They both wished to improve their skills by informal learning, i.e. using the language in a real context and acquiring new skills “by accident”. Saara hoped to achieve fluency in English also by using the language, but rather in a real work-life context than just using it in the freetime. English was strongly related to all of their future self images, and all three wished to become fluent users of English. Milla, in contrast, saw fluency in English more like a dream which she doubted to achieve than a goal. She for example named London as one of her favourite cities and was dreaming about working there, but did not think it was going to be possible due to her lack of skills in English. Thus, she saw herself working in Finland and hoped that she would not need to use English that much in her future job (see example 14). This had to do with her low motivation and fear of using the language, which was affected by her negative experiences in the past. These experiences resulted in her feeling that she was not good enough and in English becoming a burden for her. Thus, past experiences can be argued to have a great impact on the future ideal self image.

Khan (2015, see section 2.4) found out that a powerful image of the ideal self had a strong impact on the students’ achievement in learning English. My findings support this, as it became clear that all three of the participants (Niina, Saara, Juuso) had clear future ideals of themselves as fluent users of English. Thus, their motivation to study it, and therefore also achievements, were higher than Milla’s, whose future ideal self image was not so strongly related to English. Moreover, Magid (2013, see section 2.4) suggested that enhancing students’ vision about their ideal language self helps them to get more motivated and to put more effort into learning languages. The case of Niina, Saara and Juuso strengthen also this view, but Milla’s case differed from the others. She does recognise the importance of English, but still fears using it. One can speculate whether enhancing her vision would really help her to overcome her fear and thus strengthen her language learning motivation. Overall, exchange was found to have a positive effect on students’ motivation and the English language was found to exist in students’ future ideal selves. Thus, teaching English in business schools, enhancing business students’ vision about themselves as fluent users of English and promoting an exchange would be beneficial and something the professors and university teachers should take into account.

Analysing someone else's text is always somewhat risky, since it is only the interpretation of the person conducting the study. This could have affected the reliability of the results, since some information might have been misinterpreted, even though I tried to minimize the risk of being misunderstood in the interviews by asking for clarifications and additional questions. Additionally, there were only four participants, which makes it impossible to apply the results into a bigger groups of students. The study was, however, designed to be a qualitative study, which puts the focus on actually understanding the issue rather than generalizing it (Kalaja et al. 2011: 20). Thus, this limitation was taken into account before designing and executing the interviews.

Based on the present study, it can be observed that past experiences in learning English can have a strong effect on students' future ideal self images. Moreover, exchange was found to affect students' motivation to some extent, but for example to what extent it actually does so, and how an exchange period and an internship differ in terms of enhancing motivation needs to be studied further. Additionally, the same issue could be researched in a quantitative manner in order to get deeper insights. Other groups, such as younger children, adults and students from other fields of studies, would be important to study to find out how an ideal language self might affect them. Motivation is a field of study that has been in the centre of interest in Applied Linguistics for many decades, and the importance of it guarantees that it is going to be widely researched even in the future. Enhancing students' motivation to study English is more important than ever in our global, multicultural world, and its role in business students' (as well as other people's) daily life is undeniable.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview Questions (in Finnish)

#### Learning experiences (past/present)

1. Kerro aikaisemmista kokemuksistasi englannin kielen oppimisen suhteen?
2. Entä kokemukset yliopistossa? Kerro englannin kielen opinnoista/käyttamisestä nyt yliopisto-opintojen aikana.
3. Miten kuvailisit kielitaitoasi tällä hetkellä? Tahdotko parantaa sitä? Mitä haluaisit vielä oppia?

#### Ought to self (future)

1. Miten näet englannin kielen tarpeen omalla kohdallasi? Entä tulevaisuuden työn kannalta? Mitä kuvittelet sinulta vaadittavan? Pelottaako joku tulevaisuudessa (englannin opintojen/käyttämisen suhteen)?
2. Mitä kuvittelet yliopiston olettavat kielitaidoltasi ja sen kehityksestä? Entä tulevat työnantajat?

#### Ideal self (future)

1. Miksi päädyit lähtemään vaihtoon/Miksi päädyit olemaan lähtemättä vaihtoon?
  - a. Vaihtoonlähtijät: mitä oletat/toivot saavuttavasi vaihdon aikana?
2. Mitkä ovat odotuksesi lopuilta yliopisto-opinnoilta? Entä tulevaisuudessa? (englannin suhteen)
3. Mikä on ihannetilanteesi tulevaisuudessa?
4. Mitä englannin kieli on mahdollistanut sinulle? Entä mitä luulet sen mahdollistavan tulevaisuudessa?

### Appendix 2: Interview Questions (in English)

#### Learning experiences (past/present)

1. What kind of previous experiences have you had in learning English?
2. What about experiences in university? Please tell me about using/studying English during your university studies.
3. How would you describe your English competence right now? Would you like to improve it? What do you still want to learn?



Ought to self (future)

1. How do you regard the need for English for you? What about for your future job? What do you think you are going to be demanded (regarding English)? Is there something that scares you (regarding English)?
2. What do you think the university expects of your English? What about your future employers?

Ideal self (future)

1. Why did you choose to go on exchange/not to go?
  - a. The ones that chose to go: What are you expecting of your exchange?
2. What are your expectations for your studies in the university? What about for the future (regarding English)?
3. What is your ideal situation in the future?
4. What has English enabled for you? What do you think it will allow you to do in the future?

### **Appendix 3: Original data examples (in Finnish)**

(1) on paljon hyödyllisempi koska siin vaiheessa sä jou'ut käyttään sitä kieltä ihan eri lailla ... se kieli mitä työelämäs käyttää niin ei sitä opi muuten ku sit siel siinä tilanteessa sitä ite käyttämällä. Ja sen takii se työharjottelu oli tosi hyvä

(2) ja sit ehkä suurin syy on se että. Et nää kurssit on kuitenkin tosi vaikeita. Niinku täällä Suomessakin ja kuitenkin tääl on se et sä voit kavereiden kans pohtii sillee suomeks ja näin ... niin mä luulen et mä en tiä pääsisiks mä kurseista läpi koska. Taloustieteiden kurssit on tosi vaikeita.

(3) mä oon tosi kova stressaan muutenki. Niinku tota kouluhommista ja näin ja sit mä vaan aattelin et ei mä en haluu mitään lisähuolia enää mistää vaihdosta ni sit oli vaan paljo helpompi et mä en niinku lähe.

(4) mie just mietin sitä ku oisin voinu lähtee espanjankieliseen maahan ku mie oon nyt espanjaa alkanu opiskelee täällä mut sit mie aatteelin et mie haluun englannin sille tasolle et että niinku miun ei tarvii sen kans enää jännittää

(5) et mä tiän et mua jäis harmittaan se jos mä en lähtis ... kaikki on suositellu et kannattaa lähtee niin tota. En haluu sit missata

(6) koska mä haluun sen semmoseks niinku. Yhen kielen mikä ois niinku sujuva suomen lisäksi

(7) tää vaihto on sillee hyvä ku miusta ainaki siinä sillee vähä puolihuolimattomastikki oppii sitä kieltä et se ei oo semmosta et nyt opiskellaa englantia vaa että se. Tulee siinä

(8) tahon kyllä eottomasti sitä vielä parantaa ja uskon et siinä vaiheessa ku lähetään työelämään ja toivottavasti pääsee kansainvälisiin tehtäviin ni sit se paranee kyl varmasti ihan parissa kuukaudessa ku pääsee puhumaan

- (9) aina mä vaan aattelin sitä perjantaiamu et voi ei nyt se taas tulee ne kaks tuntii et on pakko mennä
- (10) Et en oo siis siltikää hirveesti koskaan englannista pitäny just sen takia ku on varmaa aina ollu nii huono ni kuka siitä sitte tykkäiskää
- (11) Varmasti oottaa niinku siis ... sujuva suomen ja englannin kielen taito, et niinku sekä suullinen että kirjallinen ... se bisneskieli sitä on osattava se tai muuten siit ei tuu mitää
- (12) Täällä on pakko osata englantia jos meinaa pärjätä ja muutenki tää ala on semmonen että englantia pitää osata jos meinaa niinku työllistyä
- (13) mul on ollu aika niinku hyvä luotto siihen että se on kuitenkin jo nyt parantunu paljon ... kyl mie uskon et mie tuun selviämään et sitä mie en pelkää
- (14) siis kyl se mua jännittää ... et jos mä oon esim menossa työhaastatteluun ja siel on se mil on samat taidot ku mulla mut sit se on niinku parempi kielissä niinni et se valitaan sit sen takii ku mä en oo tarpeeks lahjakas ... mä oon aatellu et koitan päästä vähän niinku semmosene pestiin mis sitä ei ihan hirveesti niinku kuitenkaa ois pakko
- (15) No kyl mie koen et se (kansainvälisyys) on hyvin tärkeä osa niinku. Miun tulevaisuutta ... Joo kyl mie uskon et kuitenkin (vaikka asettuisin Suomeen). Suomessakin niin tääl on tosi paljon englannin kielellä toimivia yrityksiä
- (16) No haaveena on et mie työskentelisin ensin vähän aikaa Suomessa, sitte muutamia vuosia, vuosia ulkomailla ja sit tulisin takas Suomeen ... Et ois niinku niitä mis ois työkielenä englanti
- (17) Ja varmasti tulee niinku ihan sama oikeestaan missä sää ootkaan koska. Missä töissä nii. Varmasti tulee käytettyä että.
- (18) mä oon aina sanonu kaikille et jos mä oisin tosi hyvä englannissa niinnii mä muuttaisin varmaa samantien hetkeks ulkomaille et niinku et mul on ehkä se niinku. Se kynnyks siinä se et mä en niinku luota siihen et mä niinku oon tarpeeks hyvä et voisni lähtee ulkomaille töihin
- (19) No siis mä oon itseasiassa aina tykänny siitä ... me oltiin hirveitä Harry Potter faneja ja opeteltiin kaikkia niitä tai siis just luettiin niitä kaikkia repliikkejä ja tommosista on siis oppinu tosi hyvin
- (20) Oon! Oon. Itseasiassa mä alotin englannin opiskelun ekalla luokalla ... mä menin semmoselle kieliluokalle niin sieltä ekalta asti ollaan menty
- (21) mulla tippu niinku arvosanat ihan tosi paljon niinku peruskoulun ja lukion välissä ja nyt on taas niinku vähä uudelleen joutunu (opettelemaan) ... omasta mielestä mie oon kehittyny englannissa niinku tosi paljon nyt niinku kaksikymppisenä
- (22) mun opettaja oli semmonen meijän ala-asteella et hän ei osannu itekkään englantia oikeen. Et siitä ei oikein tullu mitään ja sen jälkeen ei oo sit toi enkku oikeen napannu ku se ei niinku sitä ei heti alkuun ees oppinu et se oli tosi huono se opettaja