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**ESTONIAN NINTH GRADE STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT  
LEARNING ENGLISH IN AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL**  
**MA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the current thesis is to find out what are the Estonian ninth grade students' beliefs about learning English in and outside the classroom. This thesis is influenced by similar research conducted by Alastair Henry and Christina Cliffordson in Sweden in 2017. Their research shows that there are many factors that affect how actively students engage in learning in formal situations. English in the context of Estonia and Sweden are somewhat similar and students tend to spend a lot of their free time doing English-mediated activities outside classroom. This trend indicates that looking at students' use of English outside the classroom is a potential research area also in the context of Estonia.

The first part of the thesis gives an overview of the theoretical background of this topic. Factors relevant for English in and outside classroom discussed in this thesis are learner beliefs, experiences of self-authenticity and self-discrepancies and motivation in classroom. Furthermore, the theoretical overview describes the English language in the context of Estonia. The second part focuses on the methodology of this study and gives descriptions of the questionnaire used, participants and the exploratory statistical analysis. The third part of this thesis describes the results of this study and discusses them in the context of previous research.

The results of the thesis show that although the students' intended effort in learning English in formal settings is low, their current and ideal L2 selves describe them as confident and competent users/speakers of the English language and that in the future they intend to use English in different situations. Furthermore, the results show that there is a difference between experienced self-authenticity when using English in school and outside school.

**Keywords:** English language, English as a foreign language (EFL), learner beliefs, current L2 self, ideal L2 self, self-discrepancies, self-authenticity, in and out-of-school English

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## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where English has become a *lingua franca*. Students come in contact with this language both at school, in their English lessons and to some extent in other lessons as well, and outside school through various activities. When students come to English lessons, they often demonstrate good language skills. For some students, words that should be new on the language level they are studying at, are already familiar and they can give definitions or translations for other students without problems. Other students have a naturally good pronunciation and can easily form correct sentences. These skills can come from hard work in the classroom and/or by having extensive contact with the language outside of the classroom.

Having extensive encounters with English outside school can also make students more interested in investing effort in formal learning (Henry & Cliffordson 2017). Yet these two settings do not always support each other. Research has found that even when students actively engage in English mediated activities outside school, they do not show similar active engagement in learning English in the classroom (e.g. Henry 2013). Students might not understand the necessity of learning the language in formal settings if they have already acquired the required skills in order to successfully use the language outside the classroom and feel confident when doing so.

Contexts of learning and using English in the globalized world are becoming fluid, flexible, mobile, transitory, borderless and less easily definable (Ushioda 2013: 5). In 2017 Henry and Cliffordson researched the impact of out-of-school factors on motivation to learn English among 116 upper-secondary students in Sweden. Their research focused on self-discrepancies, beliefs and experiences of self-authenticity. Their results indicate that beliefs

about the efficacy of learning in natural environments have a negative impact on motivation in school (Henry & Cliffordson 2017: 713).

What Henry and Cliffordson (2017) found when conducting their study indicates that this is a research area that could also be tested among Estonian students. English is more and more a part of our everyday life and for many young people a preferred language of communication in many discourse practices among Estonian students as well. As a practicing teacher, the author of this thesis has noticed similar behaviors among her students as did, for example, Henry in 2013 when he wrote that students do not always actively engage in classroom activities although they actively engage in English-mediated activities outside of the classroom. I have also noticed what Olsson (2011) and Henry (2013) have said about students exhibiting language skills that they have not learned or acquired in the classroom. Therefore, the current study seeks to understand the impact that out-of-school encounters with English can have on the motivation to study in the classroom.

This thesis is strongly inspired by these personal experiences and Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) study. The thesis focuses on the same topics studied and discussed in Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) research and uses the same research methodology. In their research, Henry and Cliffordson (2017) studied the extent of impact out-of-school factors, such as self-discrepancies, beliefs, and experiences of self-authenticity have on students' motivation to learn English. They described several previous research studies done in this field and for their questionnaire, they adapted statements from Taguchi et al (2009) and Csiz̄er and Kormos' (2009) research. Csiz̄er and Kormos (2009) focused on learning experiences, selves and motivated learning behavior among Hungarian secondary students and university learners of English. Taguchi et al (2009) conducted a similar study among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners.

The aim of the thesis is to measure intended effort on learning English at school, student's current and ideal second language (L2) selves, their self-authenticity appraisals and learning English attributions. The thesis looks for answers for the following research questions:

- What are students' attitudes towards studying English in school?
- What are students' perceived current and ideal L2 selves and how different are they?
- What are students' experiences of self-authenticity regarding in and out-of-school English?
- Where do students believe they have learned most of their English?

In order to answer these questions, the thesis will first give an overview of factors relevant for classroom English and out-of-school English, including students' experiences of self-authenticity and learner beliefs. The first chapter focuses on students' experiences with authenticity and the problems that might occur when classroom and out-of-classroom English are too different. Furthermore, students' beliefs about language learning are discussed and an overview is given of what can cause these beliefs and how they might affect students' willingness to actively engage and learn in the classroom. The second chapter describes the English language in the context of Estonia. The chapter gives an overview of how and when English is taught in Estonian schools and its status in Estonia and then describes the results of The European Survey on Language Competence (2012).

The second part of the thesis gives an overview of the methodology used in the thesis, the description of the students who participated and how and when the questionnaire was conducted. Next, the results of the questionnaire are described and discussed in the context of the proposed research questions.

# 1 FACTORS RELEVANT FOR CLASSROOM AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ENGLISH

The first chapter of the thesis gives an overview of the factors that are relevant for classroom English and out-of-school English. Classroom English is here defined as the English language students learn and use in their English lessons. The language used in the classroom is often controlled by the textbooks and teacher's choices. Out-of-school English can be defined as the English language students come in contact with outside of school through English-mediated activities. For example, watching movies, listening to songs, using the Internet or social media apps, playing video games, interacting with other people in English, etc. Sundqvist (2009: i) has also used the phrase *extramural English* defining it as linguistic activities that learners engage in outside of the classroom in their spare time.

The first part of this chapter gives an overview of previous studies regarding classroom English and out-of-school English. The second part focuses on students' experiences of self-authenticity. In the third chapter learner beliefs are discussed and lastly, self-discrepancies and motivation in the language classroom are described.

## 1.1 Classroom English and out-of-school English

English lessons are not the only way students come in contact with the English language. English as a *lingua franca* is a part of our lives through many different everyday actions – browsing the web, watching movies, listening to songs, reading books/journals, playing (online) games, etc. According to previous research, being surrounded by the English language and actively using it has an effect on language skills and study motivation (e.g. Olsson 2011; Henry 2013; Henry & Cliffordson 2017; Sundqvist 2009).

As mentioned earlier, coming in contact with English outside school can happen in many ways. Some of these activities are chosen to be done in English, some are done in

English because that is how they are presented to us by default. Many social media apps that young people use only function in English. This means that in order to successfully use these apps, young people have to feel somewhat confident about their language skills. According to Henry (2013) and Olsson (2011), many Swedish students come to English lessons with surprising proficiency of the English language that they have not acquired in their English lessons. One of the reasons behind it might be their extensive contact with English-mediated activities. Henry's (2013) research shows that almost all of the 13-16-year-old Swedish students had computers and mobile phones and spent time online on a daily basis for surfing, social networking and playing digital games.

Henry (2013) focused on digital gaming, English language teaching (ELT) and the possibilities of bridging the authenticity gap between these two settings, which Henry says is growing. His literature review shows how much time Swedish students spend online, what are their main activities online and what the Swedish School Inspectorate's report on students' attitudes towards their English lessons stated. In his article, Henry (2013) writes about the experiences students get from video games and states that playing video games is meaningful for the students because of the interaction with other players and the game architecture. A similar conclusion was drawn by Olsson (2011: 131) who said that for a 15-year-old boy or girl, understanding a blog or winning a computer game might be regarded as a more worthwhile goal than good results on a test. Although Olsson (2011) studied Swedish students and their contacts with the English language, her conclusion can be understood as general and can apply to students who have a similar background and social environment.

However, when the students compare these activities to classroom activities, the feelings of frustrated authenticity are likely to arise (Henry 2013). Activities in the English classroom might not give students as much control over the language they use and the

opportunities to use the language they know. Classroom English can be very textbook-oriented, dictating both the topics and vocabulary to be used by the students and teachers. The situations created to use language in the classroom are not those in which students would typically use English outside the school and therefore these situations do not give the students the feeling of authenticity. By authenticity, I refer to being true to one's self and doing something that fits with who we feel we are and coheres with our own particular view of the world (Henry 2013: 16). Authenticity will be further discussed in section 1.2.

Besides affecting students' study motivation and authenticity of the language, out-of-school English can also have a direct effect on students' language skills. In 2011, Olsson published a research study that shows how out-of-school English affects Swedish students' writing proficiency. What led her to research this topic was how well students perform in oral tasks and what good language skills they demonstrate in that area, while their language potential is not always realized in written production (Olsson 2011). In Swedish schools, English is the only compulsory language next to Swedish (Olsson 2011: 3) and many higher education institutes also use the English language in their studies. Olsson's aim was to find out whether pupils' contact with the English language outside school seems to be of relevance to their writing proficiency in school and, if so, in what way (Olsson 2011: 9).

Olsson's (2011) study was very thorough and data was collected from the students in many different ways. Olsson's (2011) study included 37 16-year-old Swedish pupils and in order to understand their everyday use of English, the students were asked to keep a language diary to cover both the time spent using the language and the activities they used the language for. Furthermore, the students who participated in Olsson's (2011) study had to produce two written texts based on a video that was shown to them. Besides a language diary and practical written tasks, students answered questions in a questionnaire that was designed to collect background information that might be relevant regarding pupils' ability

to write and to provide information on extramural English. Olsson's (2011) study revealed that the students who have more contact with English outside school received better results in their written tasks. Her research shows that though there are different factors that determine writing proficiency in English, for some pupils the extramural contacts seem to be of great importance (Olsson 2011: 132). A great amount of extramural English gives students the idea of how to use a language and enhances their vocabulary. Similarly to how people achieve greater competence in any language – reading, listening and speaking give better skills in forming sentences and enhances one's vocabulary.

In 2014, Henry researched Swedish students' beliefs about learning English in and outside school. To do so, Henry (2014) took data from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's student questionnaire that was conducted in 2011 and analyzed the results in the context of learning English in and outside school. Swedish Schools Inspectorate's sample included students from grades 6-9 and approximately 3000 questionnaires were completed (Henry 2014). Henry's (2014) sample is considerably bigger and includes younger students than, for example, the samples in Olsson's (2011) and Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) studies. In his article, Henry (2014) again highlights Swedish students' high levels of language proficiency, adding that Sweden is a small linguistic community and the fact that Sweden is technologically advanced with universal Internet use.

In both of Henry's articles (2013, 2014) mentioned here, he draws attention to the fact that teachers should acknowledge the differences between in and out-of-school language and try to bridge the authenticity gap between these two settings. Grau's (2009) research had similar results when she studied English in German youth cultures and in educational settings. Her study combined both a questionnaire and focus group interviews with 15-year-old German students and their teachers. Grau (2009: 160) found that the classroom and the students' free time seem to be, by and large, two separate spheres, involving different

methods of exposure to English in terms of text types, topics, activities, and language varieties.

Nevertheless, for many students the external pressure to study English is strong, because of the role that English plays in tests at different transitional stages of education and of entry into the world of work. And even though some students understand the pragmatic value of learning English, for some it may still seem a practical skill (much like learning to use the computer) (Ushioda 2013). If students do not feel that what they learn about the language in the classroom is connected to their current identities or their ideal future selves, if the language they learn in the classroom does not seem authentic to them, their motivation to learn actively in the classroom lessens (Ushioda 2011). In today's world where English is widely used for many different purposes, problems like these are likely to arise since it can be hard for students to understand the learning process and its importance that takes place in the classroom.

## **1.2 Experiences of self-authenticity**

As previously described, in contexts where students have many encounters with English both in and outside school, the experiences in instructed settings and in naturalistic contexts can be very different (Henry & Cliffordson 2017: 717). This, in turn, can lead to an authenticity gap between the two settings (Henry 2013). Authenticity can be defined as the experience of being true to one's self in doing something that fits with who we feel we are and coheres with our own particular view of the world (Henry 2013: 16). Vannini and Burgess (2009: 104) say that, in general, authenticity refers to the condition or quality of realness. These definitions are somewhat similar as they both emphasize the reality and the feeling of reality. When authenticity is applied to ourselves, we get self-authenticity which refers to matters of feelings of realness or fakeness. When our actions are compatible with

our self-conceptions (our fundamental values, beliefs, and identities) our self is affirmed and we experience authenticity (Vannini & Burgess 2009: 104).

In the context of a language learner, being authentic and authenticity can refer to the similarities to the out-of-school encounters with the English language and similarities in the general opportunities they get or might get to use the language. The activities outside school, for example, surfing the web, using social media apps, writing blogs or short stories, listening to music or watching films, are something students do based on their personal interests and are therefore more engaging, creative and personally meaningful (Henry & Cliffordson 2017). The activities students come in contact with in the classroom are usually more textbook-oriented and leave little space for creativity and personal engagement. The activities they engage in outside school, are the ones students choose based on their self-conceptions and therefore the language use is authentic to them and they can experience self-authenticity. While the activities students are likely to come in contact with in the classroom are likely the ones they would not choose to do themselves – spend time on learning grammar, reading certain pre-chosen texts, learning the vocabulary, etc. These activities might not be compatible with their self-conceptions and therefore the experience of self-authenticity is not present and instead fakeness might be experienced.

Ushioda (2011) has named this kind of a changing between these two contexts and how students feel about themselves in these settings ‘transportable identities’. Engaging students ‘transportable identities’ (e.g. as a football fan, amateur photographer, art lover, film buff) can stimulate a much higher level of personal involvement, effort and investment from them than traditional teacher-student talk, where students are invariably positioned as language learners who are merely practicing or demonstrating knowledge of the language (Ushioda 2011: 16-17). Giving students the possibility to talk about something that interests them or is more of who they personally feel they are, can also lose some of the anxiety that

can arise when having to speak in a foreign language. If students have the chance to discuss something they are interested in, they are more likely to do so, which will help to decrease the authenticity gap between English in and out of the classroom.

In order to allow these topics to be raised and to allow the teacher to become aware of students' interests, a certain autonomy is required which can eventually also reduce the authenticity gap. By promoting autonomy and motivating learners to speak as themselves, we may also enable them to fulfil their potential to be the persons they want to become or grow to value, and to use language to do the things they want or grow to value, in a healthy and adaptive way that is internally consistent with their own motivation and sense of self (Ushioda 2011: 22). Therefore, allowing a certain amount of autonomy can benefit the classroom in many ways and not only reduce the authenticity gap.

Nevertheless, the growing importance of the English language has created a number of global diversities (geographical, political, social, cultural, linguistic, educational, institutional and technological) where the language is learned and such global diversities create further local diversities (curricula, teacher background, and training, resources and materials, etc.) that affect the language learning (Ushioda 2013). These global and local diversities have different possible effects on self-authenticity which means that allowing autonomy and trying to reduce the authenticity-gap in the classroom by listening to students' interests is something that has to be done on a very local level.

If the classroom language differs greatly from the language students use outside the classroom and the meaningfulness of classroom activities decreases, the authenticity gap might increase. The bigger the authenticity gap and the greater the difference between in and out-of-school language the more likely it is that students' willingness to study the language is negatively affected.

### 1.3 Learner beliefs

As mentioned earlier, learner beliefs are a part of learner's self-conceptions which can eventually affect their self-authenticity. When talking about the learning process, learner beliefs influence both, the process and product of learning (Ellis 2008: 8). This means that learner beliefs describe certain beliefs students hold towards how to learn a language and why to learn a language (also in the sense of how it adds to their identity). The amount of effort an individual is prepared to channel into language learning is, to a degree, determined by beliefs held about the nature of learning and evaluations of previous success and failures (Henry & Cliffordson 2017: 716). Henry (2014: 9) says that because beliefs have been investigated in diverse fields, and because researchers have different agendas, learner beliefs are, conceptually, difficult to pin down; unlike knowledge – which is based on an objective 'fact' – beliefs are based on evaluation and judgment. This means that the researcher has to make inferences about underlying states (Henry 2014: 9). Still, since beliefs are a part of self-authenticity and authenticity affects students' motivation to engage in classroom activities, researchers have tried and keep trying to find ways to assess learner beliefs.

Learners' beliefs about language learning derive from a variety of sources – their past experience, both of education in general and of language learning in particular, their cultural background and their personality (which, in particular, may affect self-efficacy beliefs) (Ellis 2008: 22). When students believe that the language they learn is somewhat useful for them in the future, e.g. in further education or work choices or the general knowledge that the language will help them do better in today's world, they are more likely to actively engage in different classroom activities. This way they are also more likely to more actively engage in English-mediated activities outside the classroom. English, as a *lingua franca*, is definitely something that can make students believe that good skills in this language are required to be successful in their future education and work life.

Henry (2014) focused on students' beliefs about the relative value of learning English in and outside school. Henry (2014) used different theories of self-regulation in considering how these beliefs can impact classroom motivation, particularly for those students who believe they learn most of their English outside school (Henry 2014: 8). According to Henry's research, Swedish students believe that they learn most of their English through work in school or about as much English outside school (Henry 2014: 16) and the belief is likely to be stronger among boys which can also make them less motivated in the classroom (Henry 2014: 18). Yet this belief holds a danger in itself, because if the belief that boys do not need to pay as much attention in the classroom because they achieve their English skills playing computer games, it can cause a stereotype of the young man who does not take the classroom learning seriously because he believes he can effortlessly gain English from everyday digital activities (Henry 2014). Although one's beliefs are our own, they are, no doubt, affected by what is surrounding us.

In 2011, Ryan and Mercer looked into learners' beliefs about language learning in the context of natural talent, natural acquisition and spending time abroad where the language is used daily. Their research found that students believe that formal classroom learning can only support them with certain knowledge; however, to really acquire a language some time should be spent abroad where the language is spoken (Ryan & Mercer 2011). Being in an environment where the studied language is constantly spoken and many everyday activities require the target language, the language can be mastered more easily. Besides, being in a country where the language is spoken, makes students feel less inferior to those whose language studies have been authenticated by an extensive period overseas (Ryan & Mercer 2011: 173).

Another common belief among language learners is the belief that some people are just naturally gifted language learners (Mercer & Ryan 2010). If students experience failure

in their classroom even after learning hard and meanwhile see another student experience success without much effort having been put into the learning, they might start to believe that some students are gifted language learners. After many failures and not enough support or help (from, for example, the teacher or parents) the students might feel that they are not talented enough and without any other beliefs that can help them overcome this negative belief, the students' motivation to put effort into the learning process can quickly decrease.

Although none of the beliefs are explicitly discussed in the empirical part of this thesis, it is clear that it would be interesting to study Estonian students' beliefs as they might also contribute to the previously described and discussed authenticity-gap. If these beliefs, as the previous possible stereotypical belief about boys acquiring language skills from video games, become strong beliefs for students it can affect their experience of authenticity and therefore their classroom behavior and motivation. If there are notable differences between students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning or students' beliefs are not taken into consideration, very little or no learning at all could take place (Ellis 2008). The general discourse and both global and local diversities are what help create the beliefs which can affect students' behaviors in the classroom. It is generally the role of every individual teacher to have a discussion on their students' beliefs or some other way understand their students' beliefs that should be integrated into classroom learning in order to make the learning process more effective.

#### **1.4 Self-discrepancies and motivation in the language classroom**

In 2005 Dörnyei proposed a new theory of the L2 motivational system where the ideal L2 self is put in the system. If the language learner's ideal L2 self speaks an L2, then the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves (Dörnyei 2005: 105). Since English can be

said to be a *lingua franca* and it is a language that is widely used for many purposes it is, according to Dörnyei (2011: 200), difficult to explain the motivation for learning English as a process of identification with a specific linguistic and cultural community. The factors that can affect how much effort students put into learning can vary from being generally attentive learners and wanting good grades to having certain dreams and hopes about their future selves they want to accomplish.

Possible selves (which include ideal selves) (Dörnyei 2005: 100) offer the most powerful and at the same time the most versatile, motivational self-mechanism, representing the individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming (Dörnyei 2005: 98). As Dörnyei and Ryan (2015: 87) further discuss, the stronger the self-image is, the more motivationally effective it is expected to be. Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious process (Dörnyei 2005: 65) especially when students experience an authenticity gap between the language learned and used in classroom and outside classroom. Even when students have very strong and good learning skills and they learn in a classroom where English is taught very well, without motivation to learn something the learning process is not effective.

Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) study further confirmed Dörnyei's (2005) reconceptualization of language learners' motivation and the significant role learners' ideal selves play in it. Henry and Cliffordson (2017: 733) suggest that in settings where English has become a part of everyday cultural practices and experiences, the strength of individuals' current L2 selves can mean that the idealized version – the English-speaking future self – lacks the power to align motivated behavior in a manner consistently demonstrated in other contexts.

Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) and Taguchi et al (2009) both found that students' motivation is highly connected to the effort they put into learning in the classroom. The more motivated the student the more effort is put into learning. Also, the students who believe they develop skills mostly due to instruction, work undertaken in school, and time spent doing homework are more motivated to study in school (Henry & Cliffordson 2017: 728). If the differences between student's current and ideal selves are not significant then the students might not feel the need to put effort into learning the language. Whether there is no difference because the students' current language skills are low and they do not see themselves using/speaking English in the future or the students see themselves as speaking/using English in the future, but have already acquired good language skills.

## **2 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF ESTONIA**

The second part of this thesis focuses on the English language in the context of Estonia. Students come in contact with the English language during their first years of primary education or possibly even earlier and the language studies continue throughout the basic education. If the students choose to continue their studies in a secondary school they also continue learning the language there. In higher education, they are also very likely to come in contact with the English language through their chosen field of study (e.g. lectures, study materials). The first part of this paragraph focuses on the teaching and the status of the English language in Estonia and the second part will give an overview of the role of English in Estonia according to the European Survey on Language Competence that was carried out in 2012.

### **2.1 The teaching and the status of the English language in Estonia**

According to the Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2018) learning a foreign language is compulsory in every school, but the first foreign language is chosen by the school. Those students whose main language of learning is Estonian study at least two foreign languages. In some schools learning English starts already in the first grade, in some schools, it starts in second or third grade. This means that by the end of the basic school (which is compulsory) every student has learned English for approximately seven or eight years. Those students who start learning English in the first grade or already during the pre-school years have a longer learning experience.

According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) (2015), English skills are stronger in Europe than in any other region, although not uniformly so. This report ranks 70 countries based on the data collected through an online survey. The participants for this study

are chosen randomly and the minimum number of required participants, in order for a country's results to be analyzed and included in this report, is 400. Though this report is published every year, Estonia's latest results are from the year 2015, when it was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and the country with the highest score was Sweden (EF EPI 2015). Although this survey collects data from adults and does not use a meticulous sampling procedure, it can still be claimed that the report indicated the high proficiency level of English among Estonians.

Similarly to Sweden, access to high-speed broadband Internet is widespread in Estonia and in the most recent Global Competitiveness Report (Schwab 2018) Estonia holds the 14<sup>th</sup> place in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Adaption (Sweden, for example, is 5<sup>th</sup> and Finland 16<sup>th</sup>). According to EU Kids Online (2018), 97% of Estonian children aged 9-17 use the Internet on a daily basis and the most popular activities online are watching videos, listening to music and playing online games. Though the EU Kids Online (2018) report does not specify in what languages kids prefer to do this, The European Survey on Language Competence (2012) shows that students are exposed to target language use (i.e. the English language use) through traditional and new media, indicating thus that the mentioned activities are likely done in English.

## **2.2 The European Survey on Language Competence**

In 2012, The European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) was published. The survey was the European Commission's intent to collect information about the foreign language proficiency of students in the last year of lower secondary education or the second year of upper secondary education in participating European educational systems (Costa & Albergaria-Almeida 2015). ELSC aimed to measure how well students use foreign languages to understand oral and written texts or express themselves in written form. During this research, data from 14 different countries were collected through surveys and language

tests. The data were later analyzed in detail. The research focused on the five most spoken languages in the European Union (EU) – English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. In total, the ESLC measured the proficiency of approximately 54,000 students in the last year of lower secondary or the second year of upper secondary education. In order to make the research more applicable, additional information from teachers and school leaders was collected as well.

Included in these 14 chosen countries was Estonia with 148 schools. Even though the two most studied foreign languages in Estonian schools are English and Russian, ESLC focused on analyzing Estonian students' language skills in English and German, because Russian is not an official EU language. 1660 students of English and 1380 students of German were questioned and their language skills and social backgrounds analyzed. The students were tested for reading, listening and writing skills (each student for two skills out of three). In Estonia, the students participating in this research were the students of year nine (15-16 years old). Year nine is the last year of compulsory basic education in the Estonian education system. This thesis includes data only from questions that are important in the context of this study. More detailed data can be found in the report on Estonia's results (Mere 2012).

According to ESLC (2012), the most common reason for using English outside school among Estonian students was communicating online, mostly a few times a week. A third of the Estonian participants wrote to their friends (on MSN, via email or a letter) at least a few times a week. About a quarter of them talked to their friends in English at least a few times a week. Most of the Estonian students talked to tourists in English only a few times a year. Only a few students used English to communicate with people living in their place of residence or to talk to their family a few times a year.

In 2012, the most common way to come in contact with the English language through media for Estonian students was listening to songs in English. Back then, 97% of the students said that they did it every day. Right after listening to songs in English came visiting websites in English (67%) and when not on a daily basis, a lot of students did it a few times a week. Half of the Estonian students questioned spent a few days a week watching English movies with subtitles or played computer games in English. A few times a week, a third of the students spent time watching English movies without any subtitles at all. The least common options here were reading English journals, comics or books. A third of the Estonian students read English-written books a few times a year, whereas 43% of the students said they have never done that.

Even though it has been approximately nine years since the ESLC (2012) was published it can be assumed that the past years have not changed Estonian students' language skills or the activities they use English outside school for, but rather the frequency and character of these activities are likely to have changed. In 2012 it was stated that Estonian students mostly wrote to their friends on MSN, via email or a letter. Today these platforms are more likely to be different social media apps (e.g. Facebook) and writing emails and letters is not a preferred way of communication. Other activities are likely to have remained the same – listening to songs in English, watching movies and TV shows in English, visiting websites in English and using English when traveling.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The third chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the research methods used. The first part describes the participants of this study, the second focuses on the questionnaire conducted and lastly, the choice of data analysis is described and justified.

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants for this thesis were chosen using a purposive sample (Õunapuu 2012). This means that the participants were chosen directly based on the characteristics of the thesis and the aim was to find participants similar to those who were previously used in Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) study. To do this, the author decided to use year nine students from a school in Tartu. Since the aim of this thesis is to understand the impact that out-of-school encounters with English can have on students' motivation to study in the classroom only students and not their teachers are a part of this study.

In the school involved in this study students start learning English in the first grade and as of year three, students study in different groups based on their language proficiency. English is a compulsory subject throughout the basic school until year nine. The school under study started teaching English in year one in September 2010, which means that the students who are currently in year nine (i.e. the participants of this study) and have attended this school since year one, have studied English for at least nine years.

In total, 42 students participated in this study and the number of boys and girls was equal (50% each). Students were almost equally 15- (45% of the students) and 16- (55% of the students) years old. Using this sample of students allows the author of this thesis to compare the results to previously conducted research by Henry and Cliffordson (2017) because their study included students in the same age group. Though Henry and Cliffordson (2017) described their students as year one students of upper secondary education, in Estonia

this age group corresponds to last year students of basic education. It is assumed that the last year of basic education and the first year of secondary education do not carry a significant difference in students' language skills. The students used in Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) research were taking a compulsory B1.2 level course in English. According to the Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2018) in order to be graded 'good' the students should acquire level B1.2 skills and to be graded 'very good', they have to acquire B2.1 level. Since the language levels required in Estonia to finish the basic school and the language level of the Swedish students are similar, it is possible to somewhat compare the results of this thesis with Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) findings.

### **3.2 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was an online questionnaire put together with Google Forms (see Appendix 1). This questionnaire is the same questionnaire Henry and Cliffordson (2017) used in their study. Their questions were adapted from Taguchi et al (2009) and Csizér and Kormos (2009). The author of this thesis also looked at both of these research studies and their instruments to be familiar with them and understand Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) choice when putting together their research instrument. The aim of this questionnaire was to measure intended effort on learning English at school, students' current and ideal L2 selves, their self-authenticity appraisals and learning English attributions to later discuss what effect these phenomena can have on motivated behavior in instructed learning.

Participating in this research was completely voluntary and anonymous. Before filling the questionnaire, students were informed about the purposes of this questionnaire and how and where their answers will be used. In total, students were asked to evaluate 23 statements on a six-point Likert scale, where answers varied from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The last 24<sup>th</sup> statement, where students were asked to evaluate their locus

of learning attribution, a five-point scale was used varying from ‘all/nearly all through work in school’ to ‘all/nearly all outside of work in school’.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section included questions and statements that were required to provide background information and opinions for statements about students’ effort in school. The first part included in total two questions about age and gender and four statements about the effort in school. The second section focused on students’ current and ideal L2 selves and included in total ten statements. The third section included four questions about self-authenticity appraisals and the last section included statements about learning English attributions. Since the aim of this thesis was to compare Henry and Cliffordson’s (2017) findings, the questions in the statements in the questionnaire were not changed or translated. But to make sure every student understood the statements the author of this thesis included translations of some words the students might not be familiar with in the description of each section.

To test the questionnaire and the statements a pilot survey was conducted. To pilot the study, two year nine students volunteered – one 16-year-old boy and one 15-year-old girl. The students had the chance to fill this questionnaire during their English lesson and the author of this thesis was with them the entire time to note down any questions or problems that might arise. The students had no problems or questions regarding the statements. After they had submitted their responses the author of the thesis asked for immediate feedback on the questionnaire and the translations that were offered. In general, they found the statements easily understandable and said that the provided translations aided them in cases where they needed help. After the pilot study, it was decided not to make any changes in the questionnaire and only the approximate time required to evaluate all the statements was added; the approximate time for completing the questionnaire was 8-10

minutes. Since no changes were made regarding the statements included in the questionnaire, the data from the pilot survey was also used in the final data analysis.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The data analysis included in total data from 42 participants. To analyze the results of the study, Microsoft Excel 2019 was used for exploratory statistical analysis to summarize the main characteristics. In order to compare the results of this study to previous research the data from the six-point Likert scale was used. Henry and Cliffordson (2017) used the same questionnaire to test different hypotheses and to do that they did a more thorough statistical analysis on their results to find the correlation between different factors. But since there was no exact description of their data analysis and its methods the author of this thesis decided not to replicate the research to that extent. It seems that Henry and Cliffordson (2017) converted the original ordinal data into numeric data to run their statistical analyses. However, converting Likert scale ordinal variables to numeric variables is not a methodologically correct approach to be taken, although this approach seems to be widely practiced among psychologists and linguists alike.

Likert-type data is ordinal data which means that we can only make inferences about one score being higher than another, and nothing about the distance between the points. It was decided to use only exploratory analysis in the thesis and the results focus on the modes for each statement, i.e. the most commonly chosen categories. For each statement, a contingency table is presented where the frequency of each Likert scale option is cross-tabulated with each of the statements. In these tables, the mode has been highlighted.

## **4 RESULTS**

This chapter gives an overview of the results of the questionnaire and is divided into six sections based on the categories in the questionnaire. First, I will describe students' effort in school, then their current and ideal L2 selves, self-authenticity appraisals and lastly their learning English attributions. Learning English attributions were further separated into two sections to better describe students' beliefs on where they learn most of what they know in English.

All statements in this questionnaire were coded using the codes from Henry and Cliffordson (2017) and each section first gives an overview of the statements and their codes. Following the description of the statements is a contingency table of the students' answers, where the frequency of each choice on the Likert scale is cross-tabulated with the statements. The mode, i.e. the most frequently chosen category, has been highlighted.

### **4.1 Effort in school**

The aim of the first part of the questionnaire was to understand students' effort in school. To do so, they were asked to evaluate four different statements that were coded during the analysis (Table 1). These statements included information about how much time and energy students put into learning English in school in general, compared to other subjects and their classmates.

Table 1. Effort in school: statements.

Statement	Code
I always look forward to English lessons.	EF1
I devote a lot of time and energy to studying English.	EF2
I focus much more on studying English than any other subject.	EF3
Compared to my classmates I think I study English relatively hard.	EF4

Table 2. Effort in school: results

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
EF1	2	8	10	13	7	2
EF2	1	17	8	12	4	0
EF3	7	18	9	5	3	0
EF4	5	17	10	10	0	0

The first statement the students were asked to evaluate was about looking forward to English lessons (EF1). This is a statement that can be affected by many different factors. For example, student's personal interest toward the subject or by how the subject is taught – what kind of an atmosphere is in the classroom, whether the tasks given in the lesson are interesting and whether the students and the teacher have a good relationship. This can also be related to how they feel about school in general. From the row “EF1” in Table 2 it can be seen that most of the students chose either the option slightly agree (n=13, 31<sup>1</sup>%) or slightly disagree (n=10, 24%). Stronger opinions, disagree and agree were chosen by eight (19%) and seven (16%) of the students. Two students (5%) opted for strongly disagree and the same number of students for strongly agree. Even though the total majority of the students opt for the middle section of this scale, their choices between slightly disagree and slightly agree

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<sup>1</sup> Here and henceforth, the percentage shows the proportion of the particular option out of the six options within one statement.

probably show that their English lessons are just a part of their school day and they do not cause any strong emotions.

The second statement was about the time and energy students devote to studying English (EF2). Almost half of the students (n=17, 40%) said that they disagree with this statement. Here again, the reasons for this choice can be different. Not devoting a lot of time and energy to studying English can be caused by the fact that students, in general, have little interest in the subject and therefore do not prioritize this subject or by the fact that the English subject is easy enough for them and they do not need to devote time and energy to succeed in learning English. 12 students (29%) said that they slightly agree with this statement and eight students (19%) said they slightly disagree with this statement. Four students (10%) said they agree with the statement EF2 and one student (2%) opted for strongly disagree.

Statement EF3 asked the students to compare their focus on studying English to any other subject. Similarly to the previous statement, students rather disagree with this statement (n=18, 43%). Other options were divided more evenly and nine students (21%) said they slightly agree with this statement. Seven students (17%) said that they strongly agree with this statement, which is the only statement in this section where nearly a fifth of the students expressed the strongest possible opinion towards a statement. Five students (12%) said they slightly agree with this statement and three students (7%) said they agree with this statement. What affects students' choices when evaluating this statement can again be more personal. Focusing more on studying English than any other subject can be because of the perceived importance of this subject in general or the difficulty of this subject or any other subject. If English is easy for a student, they might not focus on it more than on other subjects that might be more difficult for them, even if they find English, in general, an important subject. And if the student finds studying English difficult and, on the other hand,

does not think of it as an important subject, they are again not likely to focus on studying English more than studying any other subject.

The last statement in this category asked the students to compare their studying of English to their classmates'. As Table 2 shows, students mostly do not agree with this statement (n=17, 40%). Equally, ten students (24%) say that they slightly disagree and slightly agree with this statement. The rest of the students (n=5, 12%) say that they strongly disagree with statement EF4. Based on the results for the statements in this section, it can be said that students do not devote a lot of time and energy to studying English in general, compared to their classmates or other subjects.

## 4.2 Current L2 self

The second category of statements focused on students' current L2 self and included statements about how they see themselves as English language speakers at the moment and how that makes them feel. The statements and their respondent codes are presented in Table 3 and students answers are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Current L2 self: statements.

Statement	Code
I see myself as someone who is good at speaking/using English.	CU5
I feel comfortable using English in different situations in my life.	CU6
Communicating in English is not a problem for me.	CU7
I see myself as someone who can speak/use English in many different situations.	CU8
Being someone who can speak/use English is part of the person I am now.	CU9
I feel happy about being a person who can speak English	CU10

Table 4. Current L2 self: results.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
CU5	0	2	4	7	21	8
CU6	1	4	3	8	15	11
CU7	1	1	2	9	14	15
CU8	1	2	3	5	20	11
CU9	1	1	4	10	18	8
CU10	0	2	1	4	14	21

In general, these statements that asked students about their language using skills and how they feel when using the English language, received more positive answers. The first statement was about students currently seeing themselves as someone who is good at speaking/using English. Exactly half of the students (n=21, 50%) said that they agree with this statement. Eight students (19%) said they strongly agree and seven students (17%) said that they slightly agree with this statement. In total, six students opted for choices on the other end of the scale and four of them (10%) said they slightly disagree with this statement. Two students (5%) said that they do not agree with the statement CU5. When evaluating this statement, it should be pointed out that students' experiences with using and speaking English are different. They can evaluate their skills based on the language they speak and use in the classroom or they can evaluate their skills based on the language they speak and use outside the classroom or both. In either case, the language they come to contact with in different situations is probably different and probably requires different skills.

The second statement in this category focused more on using English in different situations and more specifically made students think about how comfortable they are when using English. The results of this statement are similar to those of the previous statement. The majority of the students still opted for agree (n=15, 36%), 11 students (26%) said they strongly agree and eight students (19%) said they slightly agree with this statement. In

general, more students opted for the more positive end of the scale for this statement. In total, only eight students chose an answer from the negative end for statement CU6: slightly disagree (n=3, 7%), disagree (n=4, 10%) or strongly disagree (n=1, 2%). Answers to these statements depend on the experience students have had with using English in different situations and these situations can vary. Some of them can have experience from traveling and having to use English abroad, some can have experience from English-mediated activities. It is also possible that some students limit the use of English in different situations to a minimum because they do not feel comfortable doing that. Feeling uncomfortable can also mean different things. On the one hand, students might think they do not have the required vocabulary or they do not feel confident enough about their pronunciation skills. Feeling uncomfortable can also come from the possible anxiety of having to use a foreign language.

The third statement, CU7, which asked the students to evaluate how well they think they can communicate in English received also rather positive replies and more than half of the students opted for agree or strongly agree. 15 students (36%) said they strongly agree and 14 students (33%) said they agree with statement CU7. Furthermore, nine students (21%) said they slightly agree with the statement. Statements CU6 and CU7 are somewhat similar, but students were more likely to say that communicating in English is not a problem for them than to say that they feel comfortable using English in different situations. With this statement, only four students opted for choices that describe disagreement with statement CU7. Two students (5%) slightly disagree, one student (2%) opted for disagree and one student (2%) opted for strongly disagree. In general, students say that communicating in English is not a problem for them, which means that they are likely to have acquired necessary language skills to use English for communicating.

The fourth statement in this category was again somewhat similar to statement CU6. While in CU6 students were asked to evaluate whether they feel comfortable using English in different situations, statement CU8 asked if students see themselves as someone who can speak/use English in many different situations. In general, the answers were similar, but when previously 15 students said they agree with the statement, then for CU8 almost half of the students (n=20, 48%) said that they agree with it, 11 students (26%) said that they strongly agree and five students (12%) said they slightly agree. Here again, in general, students are more likely to agree with this statement and in total only six students opted for choices related to disagreement. Three students (7%) said they slightly disagree, two students (5%) said they disagree and one student (2%) opted for strongly disagree. Based on the results in Table 4 it can be said that students see themselves as someone who can speak/use English in many different situations, although it might not always make them feel comfortable.

Statement CU9 asked the students whether being someone who can speak/use English is a part of the person they are now. Similarly to previous statements, the most popular answer here was again agree and this time 18 students (43%) opted for this choice. What is slightly different is that more students chose slightly agree (n=10, 24%) than strongly agree (n=8, 19%). Even though in general students opted for more positive options, their beliefs about this statement are not as strong as for previous statements. Probably this result reflects how much and what students use English for. If the amount of daily English-mediated activities is not high, then students do not feel the need to believe that being someone who can speak English is a part of who they are.

What students strongly agree with is statement CU10 which asked students about them feeling happy about being a person who can speak English. As many as 21 students (50%) said they strongly agree with this statement, 14 students (33%) said they agree and

four students (10%) said they slightly agree with this statement. These results show that students find being able to speak English important and that it gives them positive feelings. Three students did not agree with this statement, one student (2%) chose the option slightly disagree and two students (5%) said they disagree with this statement. Not feeling happy about being a person who can speak English can be affected by students' language skills, the confidence to speak/use English and their general views and beliefs.

### 4.3 Ideal L2 self

The third category of statements focused on students' ideal L2 self and included statements about how students see themselves using English in the future and what feelings it can cause. The statements and their respective codes are presented in Table 5 and students' answers are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Ideal L2 self: statements.

Statement	Code
I see myself as someone in the future who is good at speaking/using English.	ID11
If my dreams come true, I will use English effectively in the future.	ID12
I see myself as someone who in the future uses English in contact with people outside Estonia.	ID13
When I think about the future I can see myself speaking/using English in many different situations.	ID14
Being someone who can speak/use English is part of the person I will be in the future.	ID15

Table 6. Ideal L2 self: results.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
ID11	0	3	2	1	14	22
ID12	0	2	3	3	21	13
ID13	0	2	5	9	12	14
ID14	0	2	1	11	13	15
ID15	0	2	1	8	19	12

The results of this category are rather similar to those in the previous category which suggests that differences between students' current L2 selves and ideal L2 selves are not very prominent. The first statement asked students to evaluate whether they see themselves as someone who in the future is good at speaking/using English. 50% of the students said that they currently agree with seeing themselves as someone who is good at speaking/using English: 22 students (52%) said that they strongly agree with this statement, 14 students (33%) said they agree with this statement and one student (2%) opted for slightly agree. Five students were towards the other end of the scale: three students (7%) said they slightly disagree and two said (5%) they disagree with the given statement. How students feel about this statement depends on how they see themselves in the future in general. If they choose to continue their studies in higher education institutes then being good at speaking/using English is probably important for them. Also, if they have by now required good language skills then being even better in the future is a logical course of action.

The second statement asked the students about using English effectively in the future if their dreams come true. With a more general statement students mostly strongly agreed with being someone in the future who is good at speaking/using English; but when the statement was about their dreams about the future, students choices lowered from strongly agree to agree (n=21, 50%) and only 13 students (31%) said that they strongly agree with this statement. The rest of the choices were slightly agree (n=3, 7%), slightly disagree (n=3,

7%) and disagree (n=2, 5%). These results are affected by how the students have planned their future at this point and what are their dreams regarding their future. Even though they see themselves in the future as someone who is good at speaking/using English, their dreams and effective use of English are not linked.

The third ideal L2 self-statement was about using English in contact with people outside Estonia. Here again, most of the students opted for strongly agree (n=14, 33%) but the differences with other options were not as remarkable. The option agree was chosen by 12 students (29%) and slightly agree by nine students (21%). In total seven students said that they rather slightly disagree (n=5, 12%) or disagree (n=2, 5%) with this statement. With the two previous questions in this category students' answers were more divided between two options. This and the following statement show a more equal distribution between three statements. Behind these results are two likely factors that can affect the results – the amount of contact they believe to have with people outside of Estonia and whether English is the language they would use in these situations. The results of this questionnaire show that English seems to be the language of choice in these situations.

The next statement asked the students to evaluate whether they see themselves in the future using/speaking English in many different situations (ID14). As an opposite to the previous statement (ID13), the students here were asked to evaluate their language use more generally, but the results were similar to the previous statement. Most of the students (n=15, 36%) said that they strongly agree with statement ID14 and the rest of the students also opted for the more positive end of the scale. 13 students (31%) said they agree and 11 students (26%) said they slightly agree with the given statement. One student (2%) chose the slightly disagree option and two students (5%) said they disagree with this statement. Compared to the results of statement ID11, which showed that students aim to be good at speaking/using English, they do see themselves using/speaking English in many different situations.

The last statement asked the students to evaluate whether being someone who can speak/use English is part of the person they will be in the future. Once again the most popular options were agree (n=19, 45%), strongly agree (n=12, 29%) and slightly agree (n=8, 19%). Three students, once again, chose an option from the other end of the scale - one (2%) opted for slightly disagree and two (5%) for disagree. In the previous category, there was a similar question but it was more focused on students' current L2 selves. Similar results in both categories show that students agree that being someone who can speak/use English is a part of the person they are now and a part of the person they will be in the future. Being someone who can speak/use English is generally a part of who they are and it is not likely to change in the years to come, although they might not see themselves as good language users or use English in many different situations.

#### **4.4 Self-authenticity appraisals**

The fourth category of statements focused on students' self-authenticity appraisals and included statements about how students feel about using English in and outside the school and the realness and meaningfulness of these actions. The statements and their corresponding codes are presented in Table 7 and students answers are presented in Table 8.

Table 7. Self-authenticity appraisals: statements.

Statement	Code
I get greater personal satisfaction when I use/speak English outside school than I do when I use/speak English in lessons.	AU16
The things I do when I use/speak English outside school feel more meaningful than the things I do when I use/speak English in lessons.	AU17
Using English outside school feels more real compared to the things we do in English lessons.	AU18
I am more 'myself' when I use/speak English outside of school than when I use/speak English in lessons.	AU19

Table 8. Self-authenticity appraisals: results.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
AU16	0	2	3	15	13	9
AU17	0	2	5	12	16	7
AU18	0	1	4	10	15	12
AU19	1	3	4	14	11	9

In this category students' answers were again more towards the agreeing end of the scale but not as strongly as previously. For the first statement, which asked the students to compare the personal satisfaction they get when using/speaking English outside of school to the one they get when they use/speak English in lessons, 15 students (36%) said that they slightly agree with this statement, 13 students (31%) said they agree and nine students (21%) said they strongly agree. Three students (7%) said they slightly disagree and two students (5%) said they disagree with the statement AU16.

The results of the next statement are likely to reflect some of the reasons for the results of the previous one. The second statement was about the meaningfulness of the activities where students use/speak English outside school and those in lessons. When in the previous statement students said that they get greater personal satisfaction from

using/speaking English outside school then this might be because they find the things they do when they use/speak English outside school also more meaningful. In total, only eight students said that they disagree (n=2, 5%) or slightly disagree (n=5, 12%) with this statement. Most of the students (n=16, 38%) said that they agree with this statement. The rest of the students divided between slightly agree (n=12, 29%) and strongly agree (n=7, 17%). When students find the things they do when they use/speak English meaningful then using English can give them greater personal satisfaction.

The next statement was similar to the previous one but instead of meaningfulness, it asked the students to evaluate the realness of using English outside the school and in English lessons. Similarly to the previous statement (AU17), more meaningful activities also seem more real to students and only one student (2%) disagreed and four students (10%) slightly disagreed with this statement. Most of the students say that using English outside school feels more real for them as 15 students (36%) opted for agree, 12 students (29%) for strongly agree and ten students (24%) for slightly agree. This can be a result of the materials used and topics covered in the classroom. If what they have to use English for in their English lessons is different from the actual activities they might use English for, using English in their lessons might seem somewhat fake.

The last statement in this category asked the students to evaluate whether they feel more 'themselves' when they use/speak English outside school than when they use/speak English in lessons. If the things they do when they use/speak English are more meaningful and more real, then students also feel more 'themselves' when using the language in these situations. Third of the students (n=14, 33%) said they slightly agree with this statement and furthermore 11 students (26%) said they agree and nine students (21%) said they strongly agree with this statement. In total eight students were on the other end of the scale and four

students (10%) said they slightly disagree, three students (7%) said they disagree and one student (2%) strongly disagreed with the given statement.

Based on the results of the section which asked students to evaluate different self-authenticity appraisals it can be said that the activities students do outside school seem more meaningful and real to them and give a greater sense of authenticity than the activities they engage with in their English lessons.

#### 4.5 Learning English attributions

The last category in this questionnaire was further divided in two to first give an overview of work, homework, teaching and natural ability attribution and then give an overview of locus of learning attribution which will be described separately after statements E:1-E:4. The statements and their corresponding codes are presented in Table 9 and students answers are presented in Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 9. Learning English attributions: statements.

Statement	Code
My skills in using English are largely due to the effort I put in in school.	E:1
My skills in using English are largely due to the effort I put in doing homework.	E:2
My skills in using English are largely due to the teaching I have had at school.	E:3
My skills in using English are largely due to my own natural ability.	E:4
Where do you believe you learned most of what you know in English?	E:5

Table 10. Learning English attributions: results.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
E:1	5	7	8	10	9	3
E:2	5	6	12	13	5	1
E:3	2	3	8	12	10	7
E:4	2	4	7	13	10	6

In this category students answers to all statements are quite similar and they believe that behind their skills in using English are equally school, homework, teaching and their natural ability. The first statement focused on the effort they put in in school. The four most popular options here were slightly agree (n=10, 24%), agree (n=9, 21%), slightly disagree (n=8, 19%) and disagree (n=7, 17%). The differences between these options are rather small for statement E:1 and both ends of the scale are presented as well. Five students (12%) said they strongly disagree and three students (7%) said they strongly agree with this statement.

The second statement asked the students about the effort they put in doing homework. Similarly to the previous statement EF2 in the first section of the questionnaire (I devote a lot of time and energy to studying English) students do not seem to put a lot of effort into studying English and doing their homework. With this statement, the students' choices mostly divided between slightly agree (n=13, 31%) and slightly disagree (n=12, 29%). The differences between these choices are not big, but one of them is more negative than the other. Other choices are also more at the negative end of the scale where six students (14%) said they disagree and five (12%) said they strongly disagree with this statement. The option agree was chosen by five students (12%) and one student (2%) said to strongly agree with statement E:2. The results of this statement show that students do not believe that their skills in using English are due to the effort they put in doing homework. This result is likely due to several reasons, some of them being that the homework is easy for them, they do not do their homework or they do not have homework.

The next statement asked the students to think about the teaching they have had in school and if their skills in using English are due to the teaching. Similarly to previous statements, the most popular answer was slightly agree (n=12, 29%) which was followed by agree (n=10, 24%) and slightly disagree (n=8, 19%). Yet the statement about teaching is the one which received the highest choices of strongly agree (n=7, 17%) in this category in general. Even though students slightly agree on having the required skills due to the teaching, they are also most likely to strongly agree with this statement. In total five students said that they either disagree (n=3, 7%) or strongly disagree (n=2, 5%) with statement E:3.

The last statement in this category and the last statement which used the six-point Likert scale was about having skills in using English due to natural ability. Yet again, similarly to the previous statements, students do not express strong beliefs about this statement and most of them said they slightly agree (n=13, 31%) or agree (n=10, 24%) with statement E:4. Six students (14%) said that they strongly agree with the statement that their skills in using English are due to natural ability. In total six students said that they disagree (n=4, 10%) or strongly disagree (n=2, 5%) with this statement. Based on these results it can be said that students are likely to believe that they have good natural abilities and they also believe that this is where their skills in using English come from.

The last statement in this category was a question about where do students believe they learned most of what they know in English. With this question, students had to choose from five different response options which are presented in Table 11 and the focus was on learning through work in school and outside of work in school.

Table 11. Locus of learning attribution: results.

Statement	All/nearly all through work in school	Most through work in school	About as much outside through work in school as	Most outside of work in school	All/nearly all outside of work in school
E:5	0	13	15	10	4

Most of the students believe that they learned about as much English outside as through work in school (n=15, 36%) or believe they learned most through work in school (n=13, 31%). None of the students said that they believe only the school to be the place they have acquired most of their skills from, but four students (10%) did say that they believe they learned all/nearly all of what they know in English outside of work in school. The rest of the students (n=10, 24%) said that they believe they learned most of what they know outside of work in school. Although students do believe that the English they learn in school is important and that they have learned a lot through work in school, the results show that out-of-school English also plays an important role in learning English.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis was to measure intended effort on learning English in schools, student's current and ideal L2 selves, their self-authenticity appraisals and learning English attributions and to find out what are Estonian ninth grade students' beliefs about learning English in and outside of school.

Henry and Cliffordson (2017) stated that extensive encounters with English outside of school can make students less interested in investing effort in formal learning which is also similar to Henry's (2013) findings. The results of current study are similar in the sense that Estonian students' are also actively engaged in English-mediated activities outside of classroom and their general effort in formal English studies is rather low. The reasons why students do not put a lot of effort into studying can be different. Whether they feel they have acquired enough skills to successfully use the English language, English language is generally easy for them and therefore they do not need to put a lot of effort into studying or their English lessons are not interesting enough for them to invest effort in them. Henry and Cliffordson (2017) and Taguchi et al (2009) both found that students' motivation is highly connected to the effort they put into learning in the classroom. This being the case, it can be said that the students who participated in this study are not likely to be motivated to learn English.

As mentioned there are many factors that can affect how students feel about learning English in formal settings and the effort they are willing to put into learning. This research focused on students' current and ideal L2 selves and the differences between these two settings. Based on the results the differences between their current and ideal L2 selves are not big. Students currently see themselves as good English speakers/users which is how they also see themselves in the future. Yet, in general, the statements about current L2 selves received stronger positive answers than the ideal L2 statements. Dörnyei (2005) said that if

the language learner's ideal L2 self speaks an L2 then the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator. Since students' beliefs about their future L2 selves are not as strongly related to using English as their current selves their willingness to put effort into formal learning can be lower as well. Which can therefore explain the high number of negative answers regarding the statements about effort in school.

Another factor that can strongly affect students' willingness to effectively learn is the experiences of self-authenticity. The experiences students get in instructed settings and in naturalistic contexts can be very different (Henry & Cliffordson 2017: 717) and if the activities students engage in are not compatible with their self-conceptions their selves are not affirmed and they do not experience authenticity (Vannini & Burgess 2009). These negative experiences of authenticity can lead to an authenticity gap (Henry 2013). As the results of this study show the authenticity gap is likely to exist among the students who participated in this study. Most of the students found the activities they use English for outside of school to be more meaningful and more real. Therefore, the perceived authenticity gap among the students of this study is a likely reason they do not put as much effort into learning English in school. As Ushioda (2011) said, a way to reduce this authenticity gap is to offer students more autonomy in the classroom and the teacher's recognition of students' interests as language learners.

Even though students do not put effort in learning English in school they still feel that their skills in using English are due to the effort they put in learning school, the effort they put in doing homework and the teaching they have had. Similarly, positive responses were given to the statement that asked students if they feel their skills are due to their natural abilities. It can be said that even though students do not put a lot of effort in learning English in school they find learning English in school important and useful and that they have learned most of what they know in English equally in and outside of work in school. According to

their ideal L2 selves, the students find English important and see themselves as skillful users/speakers of the language in the future, yet they do not put effort in learning English in formal settings and say that they have learned most of their skills equally in school and outside of work in school. These findings can implicate that the language students come in contact with outside of classroom gives them extensive possibilities to use the language, therefore helps them better acquire the language and they do not feel they have to put much effort in learning English in school.

Based on the results of the study it can be said that students' beliefs and the differences between these beliefs are different for different individuals (see Appendix 3 for a contingency table where the frequency of each choice on the Likert scale is cross-tabulated with each of the 42 students). If a student gave more negative answers to statements in one category then the same student was likely to give more negative answers in other categories as well. For example, those students whose perceptions about current L2 selves were negative had more negative perceptions about their ideal L2 selves as well. And if students feel that the person they currently are does not have good language skills and the person they see themselves as in the future will not have good language skills either or will not use English in different situations, the effort they are willing to put in learning in school is low.

Four students out of these 42 (10%) said they have learned all or nearly all of what they know in English outside of work in school. In general, these four students somewhat look forward to their English lessons yet they do not put a lot of effort in learning English. Their current and ideal L2 selves are very similar – they describe themselves as good speakers/users of English and they see themselves using English in the future in different situations. These students stated that their skills in using English are not due to the effort they put in in school, the effort they put in doing homework, the teaching they have had in school or due to their natural abilities. They simply believe that most of the English they

have learned is from work outside of school. This finding is related to Henry's (2013) and Olsson's (2011) notes on students who come to the classroom and have knowledge and skills of language they have not yet come in contact with in the classroom and Henry's (2014: 16) research where he said that Swedish students believe they learn most of their English through work in school or about as much English outside school.

Besides more personal differences towards beliefs about learning English in and outside of classroom, there are noteworthy differences between boys and girls as well (see Appendix 4). When discussing student beliefs Henry (2014: 16) noted that the belief of learning about as much English in and outside school is likely to be stronger among boys. Furthermore, with gender-related differences Henry (2014) discussed the possible stereotypes that might arise and which can cause beliefs among students that are later difficult to change. Although this thesis does not focus on gender-related differences, it is still a noteworthy finding that should be further studied. There is a clear indication that boys and girls have different experiences with out-of-school English and they also have noticeably different beliefs about the use of English in and outside school. If these beliefs are not taken into consideration, very little or no learning at all could take place (Ellis 2008).

The previous findings among students from other countries (e.g. Sweden, Germany, Japan, Hungary etc.) and the current findings among these Estonian students who participated in this study confirm that this topic is an important research area. The findings here suggest that there is an authenticity gap between the language students use in and outside classroom, which can make learning the language harder for them. Yet their ideal L2 selves hold strong beliefs about using/speaking English well in the future in different situations. To better understand the cause of this authenticity gap, further research on this topic should be conducted which can then also provide more exact suggestions on how to help reduce the authenticity gap.

The results of this research can, to some extent, be generalized in the context of Estonia. However, to get a more detailed and comprehensive overview about Estonian students' beliefs about learning English in and outside classroom, more students and also students from different schools should be included in this study. Also, a confirmative statistical analysis of the results would help to decide which of the possible factors have a statistically significant impact on students' motivation which would then make the results of the research more comparable to the previous studies and therefore more general suggestions about teaching English to Estonian basic school students could be made.

## CONCLUSION

Studying the English language in a world where English has become a *lingua franca* and students have extensive encounters with the language outside of school can be challenging for students in the sense that it might be difficult for them to understand the necessity of learning this language in formal settings. The aim of this thesis was to give an overview of some of the factors relevant for learning English in and outside classroom and what kind of an impact these factors can have on students' motivation to study English in the classroom.

Research similar to this was conducted by Henry and Cliffordson (2017) among 116 upper-secondary students in Sweden which found that beliefs about the efficacy of learning in natural environment can have a negative impact on motivation in school. The English-mediated activities students engage in outside classroom are more likely to be meaningful for them than classroom activities (Henry 2013, Olsson 2011) which can make them less actively engaged in the classroom. Considering the English-mediated activities Estonian students engage in outside classroom (ESLC 2012) and Henry and Cliffordson's (2017), Henry's (2013) and Olsson's (2011) findings, this is a research area that could also be tested among Estonian students.

As previous research shows, the main factors that can have an impact on students' motivation are their beliefs about learning the language, experiences of self-discrepancies and experiences of self-authenticity. If students' current and ideal L2 selves are similar (whether in a positive or a negative way), their intended effort in the classroom is low. Furthermore, if students' experiences with self-authenticity with the language used in and outside classroom are negative, meaning the activities they engage in outside the classroom are more meaningful for them, then it can also have a negative effect on their intended effort in classroom.

The aim of this thesis was to measure the intended effort on learning English at school, student's current and ideal L2 selves, their self-authenticity appraisals and learning English attributions. In order to do that a study, similar to Henry and Cliffordson's (2017) was conducted. In total 42 ninth grade students from a school in Tartu answered 24 statements in an online questionnaire. First, the students were asked to evaluate 23 statements on a six-point Likert scale. For the last statement, which was about students' locus of learning English, a five-point scale was used. The statements were about their intended effort in school, current and ideal L2 selves, self-authenticity appraisals and learning English attributions. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using exploratory statistical analysis.

The results of this thesis show that similar findings to those found for other countries, e.g. Sweden, Germany, Hungary, and Japan, also apply to Estonian ninth grade students. The students who participated in this study do not put significant effort into learning English yet both their current and ideal L2 selves are good at speaking/using English and they see themselves using English in different situations in the future. Furthermore, Estonian students' experiences with self-authenticity are rather negative and they find the activities they do outside classroom to be more meaningful and real for them than the activities they engage in classroom. These findings implicate a possible authenticity gap between the language students use in and outside classroom which can reduce their motivation to study in the classroom. As Ushioda (2011) suggested, a way to reduce this authenticity gap is to offer students more autonomy and allowing them to more speak as themselves.

The results of this study show that Estonian ninth grade students find being able to speak English important and that it gives them positive feelings. Yet they believe that they learn most of their language skills about as much outside school as through work in school (n=15, 36%) and the belief that as much or even more English is learned outside of work in

school is stronger among boys. Similar conclusions were made by Henry (2014) which shows that boys and girls have different experiences with out-of-school English and that they have different beliefs about the use of English in and outside school and if students' beliefs are not taken into consideration, very little or no learning at all could take place (Ellis 2008). This finding is a suggestion for a topic that could be further researched in order to give a more comprehensive overview of these gender-related differences and the impact they can have on students' engagement in formal learning in the classroom.

Though the results of this thesis can only be generalized to some extent, it does give an overview of the beliefs Estonian students are likely to have about learning English in and outside school and the impact their out-of-school encounters with the language can have. It is hoped that future research will look into more detail with respect to some of the more important findings presented in the thesis, e.g. the authenticity gap and the difference between the beliefs boys and girls have about learning English. It is also hoped that a study on a larger scale incorporating students from different schools across Estonia will be conducted on the same topic.

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## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

For the first 23 statements a six-point Likert scale was used:

- strongly disagree;
- disagree;
- slightly disagree;
- slightly agree;
- agree;
- strongly agree.

For the last statement (E:5) five response options were given:

- all/nearly all through school;
- most through work in school;
- about as much outside as through work in school;
- most outside of work in school;
- all/nearly all outside of work in school.

Dear student!

I am asking for your help to write my thesis. Here are some statements considering your English studies and your beliefs about using/speaking the English language. When answering these statements, please be honest and attentive. All the answers you give here are completely anonymous and in no way traceable back to the students who filled this form.

This questionnaire is divided into four different sections and each section will have statements about different topics. In total, you have to give your opinion on 24 different statements. Once again, when giving answers, please be honest and attentive. It will take about 5-10 minutes.

In the description of each section, I have also translated some of the words that are used in the statements that might confuse you. If you have any additional questions, don't hesitate to ask.

All the results here will be only used in my master's thesis.

If you have any further questions considering this questionnaire or my thesis, feel free to contact me.

Thank you!

Siiri Mugra

[siiri.mugra@gmail.com](mailto:siiri.mugra@gmail.com)

## EFFORT IN SCHOOL

- EF1 I always look forward to English lessons.
- EF2 I devote a lot of time and energy to studying English.
- EF3 I focus much more on studying English than any other subject.
- EF4 Compared to my classmates I think I study English relatively hard.

## CURRENT L2 SELF

- CU5 I see myself as someone who is good at speaking/using English.
- CU6 I feel comfortable using English in different situations in my life.
- CU7 Communicating in English is not a problem for me.
- CU8 I see myself as someone who can speak/use English in many different situations.
- CU9 Being someone who can speak/use English is part of the person I am now.
- CU10 I feel happy about being a person who can speak English.

## IDEAL L2 SELF

- ID11 I see myself as someone in the future who is good at speaking/using English.
- ID12 If my dreams come true, I will use English effectively in the future.
- ID13 I see myself as someone who in the future uses English in contact with people outside Estonia.
- ID14 When I think about the future I can see myself speaking/using English in many different situations.
- ID15 Being someone who can speak/use English is part of the person I will be in the future.

## SELF-AUTHENTICITY APPRAISALS

- AU16 I get greater personal satisfaction when I use/speak English outside school than I do when I use/speak English in lessons.
- AU17 The things I do when I use/speak English outside school feel more meaningful than the things I do when I use/speak English in lessons.
- AU18 Using English outside school feels more real compared to the things we do in English lessons.
- AU19 I am more 'myself' when I use/speak English outside school than when I use/speak English in lessons.

## LEARNING ENGLISH ATTRIBUTIONS

E:1 Work in School Attribution:

My skills in using English are largely due to the effort I put in in school.

E:2 Homework Attribution:

My skills in using English are largely due to the effort I put in doing homework.

E:3 Teaching Attribution:

My skills in using English are largely due to the teaching I have had in school.

E:4 Natural Ability Attribution

My skills in using English are largely due to my own natural ability.

E:5 Locus of Learning Attribution:

Where do you believe you learned most of what you know in English?

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire results by statement

Table 12. Questionnaire results by how much each option was chosen for each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
EF1	2	8	10	13	7	2
EF2	1	17	8	12	4	0
EF3	7	18	9	5	3	0
EF4	5	17	10	10	0	0
CU5	0	2	4	7	21	8
CU6	1	4	3	8	15	11
CU7	1	1	2	9	14	15
CU8	1	2	3	5	20	11
CU9	1	1	4	10	18	8
CU10	0	2	1	4	14	21
ID11	0	3	2	1	14	22
ID12	0	2	3	3	21	13
ID13	0	2	5	9	12	14
ID14	0	2	1	11	13	15
ID15	0	2	1	8	19	12
AU16	0	2	3	15	13	9
AU17	0	2	5	12	16	7
AU18	0	1	4	10	15	12
AU19	1	3	4	14	11	9
E:1	5	7	8	10	9	3
E:2	5	6	12	13	5	1
E:3	2	3	8	12	10	7
E:4	2	4	7	13	10	6

	All/nearly all through work in school	Most through work in school	About as much outside work in school as through work in school	Most outside of work in school	All/nearly all outside of work in school
E:5	0	13	15	10	4

### Appendix 3. Questionnaire results by participant

Table 13. Questionnaire results by the frequency of each choice with each of the 42 students.

Subject	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	E:5
subject01	1	2	1	2	1	16	Most outside of work in school
subject02	1	1	4	5	5	7	About as much outside as through work in school
subject03	0	1	1	2	7	12	Most outside of work in school
subject04	1	3	3	10	6	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject05	0	2	3	9	3	6	Most through work in school
subject06	0	3	3	8	9	0	Most through work in school
subject07	5	3	1	0	1	13	Most outside of work in school
subject08	0	1	12	9	1	0	Most through work in school
subject09	0	3	3	3	8	6	Most outside of work in school
subject10	0	0	1	9	12	1	About as much outside as through work in school
subject11	0	3	2	4	2	12	About as much outside as through work in school
subject12	0	0	2	3	9	9	About as much outside as through work in school
subject13	0	2	1	2	11	7	Most through work in school
subject14	4	2	3	4	5	5	All/nearly all outside of work in school
subject15	0	3	8	4	8	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject16	0	2	3	4	11	3	Most outside of work in school
subject17	0	3	1	9	10	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject18	0	3	3	6	7	4	Most outside of work in school

subject19	3	2	1	5	5	7	Most through work in school
subject20	0	8	15	0	0	0	Most through work in school
subject21	0	0	0	12	11	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject22	4	0	2	2	0	15	All/nearly all outside of work in school
subject23	0	1	0	8	12	2	Most through work in school
subject24	3	3	1	0	0	16	All/nearly all outside of work in school
subject25	0	1	4	2	11	5	About as much outside as through work in school
subject26	0	1	0	8	6	8	Most outside of work in school
subject27	0	2	1	6	12	2	Most through work in school
subject28	0	6	1	1	13	2	Most outside of work in school
subject29	0	1	2	6	12	2	Most through work in school
subject30	1	2	1	4	8	7	Most through work in school
subject31	0	1	3	5	13	1	About as much outside as through work in school
subject32	4	1	1	3	3	11	All/nearly all outside of work in school
subject33	0	0	5	7	11	0	Most outside of work in school
subject34	0	14	5	3	1	0	Most through work in school
subject35	0	0	3	15	5	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject36	0	4	3	7	7	2	About as much outside as through work in school
subject37	2	3	8	7	3	0	Most through work in school
subject38	0	0	2	4	10	7	About as much outside as through work in school
subject39	0	1	2	5	10	5	Most through work in school

subject40	1	3	1	2	9	7	Most outside of work in school
subject41	4	18	0	1	0	0	About as much outside as through work in school
subject42	0	2	1	8	6	6	About as much outside as through work in school

#### Appendix 4. Questionnaire results by gender

Table 14. Questionnaire results by gender.

Gender	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Female	8	68	76	120	137	74
Male	26	43	41	94	147	132

Table 15. Locus of learning attribution by gender.

Gender	All/nearly all through work in school	Most through work in school	About as much outside as through work in school	Most outside of work in school	All / nearly all outside of work in school
Female	0	10	9	2	0
Male	0	3	6	8	4

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Siiri Mugra**

**Estonian ninth grade students' beliefs about learning English in and outside of school  
Eesti üheksanda klassi õpilaste uskumused seoses inglise keele õppimisega koolis ja  
väljaspool kooli**

Magistritöö

2019

Lehekülgede arv: 63

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks oli uurida, millised on üheksanda klassi õpilaste uskumused seoses inglise keele õppimisega koolis ja väljaspool kooli. Töö aluseks on Alastair Henry ja Christina Cliffordsoni samalaadne uuring, mis viidi läbi Rootsis aastal 2017. Töö on jaotatud neljaks ning esimeses, teoreetilises peatükis, antakse ülevaade töö teoreetilistest alustest – erinevatest teguritest, mis mõjutavad inglise keele õppimist koolis ja väljaspool kooli, sealhulgas õpilaste hinnangud endale keelekasutajana praegu ning keelekasutajana tulevikus ning keeleõppe autentsus. Lisaks kirjeldatakse inglise keele olukorda Eestis (selle õppimist ning Eesti õpilaste oskuseid üldiselt). Töö teises osas kirjeldatakse uuringu metoodikat – küsimustikku, osalejaid (n=42) ning kirjeldava statistilise andmeanalüüsi põhimõtteid. Töö kolmandas osas kirjeldatakse lähemalt uuringu tulemusi ning neljandas arutletakse käesoleva töö uuringu tulemuste üle varasemate uurimuste kontekstis. Töö tulemused näitavad, et uuringus osalenud õpilased ei hinda enda panust inglise keele õppimisse tugevaks, ent näevad end praegu ja ka tulevikus oskuslike ja enesekindlate keelekasutajatena. Lisaks selgub töö tulemustest, et õpilaste hinnangul erinevad koolis õpitav ning väljaspool kooli kasutatav inglise keel teineteisest ning väljaspool kooli kasutatav keel tundub nende jaoks elulisem ja autentsem kui klassiruumis kasutatav.

Märksõnad: inglise keele õppimine, inglise keel võõrkeelena, hinnang keelekasutusele olevikus, hinnang keelekasutusele tulevikus, keelekasutuse autentsus, keeleõppe autentsus, inglise keel koolis ja väljaspool kooli

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Siiri Mugra,

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