

# **Subject choice and the English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school**

*A survey*

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## Abstract

In this thesis I aim to examine how Norwegian upper secondary school students specialising in General Studies, explain their decision to study, or not to study, one or more of the elective English programme subjects *International English*, *Social Studies English* or *English Literature and Culture*. The study, which was informed by motivation theory, is conducted using a quantitative method. I collected data using questionnaires, distributed to students from nine state run upper secondary schools from different parts of Norway. Of these, seven schools were chosen in a random selection, while two schools were recruited through personal contacts. In total, 484 students answered my questionnaire. I argue that the sample is reasonably representative, and that the study's main conclusions therefore can be generalised to the population.

My findings indicate that students consider the English programme subjects very useful. Regardless of subject choice, most respondents believe that the subjects in question have real-life applicability and provide useful skills and knowledge. Of the students who had chosen English, a majority report that it was precisely this usefulness – particularly with regards to further studies and work – which was decisive for their subject choice. In addition, they report that their choice was informed by a wish to learn the English language better, and that they felt confident they could manage a decent grade. All in all, their reasons for choosing to study English fit well with a motivation theory called Expectancy-Value theory.

There was less agreement among students who had decided to not study English. However, it would seem that most of them explain their choice by refer either to 1) lacking interest, 2) lacking scholastic abilities for language learning or 3) external factors such as difficulties in timetabling or entrance requirement for higher education.

In the conclusion, I suggest that this study has at least two implications. First, as most students appear to choose English programme subjects because they wish to prepare for the use of English in real-life settings, it seems teachers will benefit from planning lessons in a way that can accommodate this desire. Second, I believe there are certain indications in the study suggesting that teachers and other educational authorities tend to regard the English programme subjects as less relevant for students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics subjects, compared to students of the Languages, Social Science and Economics programme. This could potentially be problematic, particularly because the students themselves not appear to share this view.

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## Sammendrag

Målet med denne masteroppgaven er å undersøke hvordan elever på studiespesialiserende linje i norsk videregående skole forklarer hvorfor de valgte, eller ikke valgte, et eller flere av de engelske programfagene *Internasjonal engelsk*, *Samfunnsfaglig engelsk* og/eller *Engelskspråklig litteratur og kultur*. Studien, som bygger på motivasjonsteori, benyttet en kvantitativ metode. Jeg samlet inn data ved hjelp av spørreskjemaer, distribuert til elever ved ni offentlige videregående skoler fra forskjellige steder i Norge. Av disse skolene ble syv trukket ut gjennom tilfeldig utvalg, mens to ble rekruttert til deltakelse gjennom personlige kontakter. Totalt sett var det 484 elever som besvarte spørreskjemaet mitt. Jeg vil hevde at utvalget er tilstrekkelig representativt, og at studiens hovedkonklusjoner derfor kan generaliseres til populasjonen.

Mine funn tyder på at norske elever anser de engelske programfagene som svært nyttige. Uavhengig av elevenes fagvalg, mener de fleste at disse fagene har anvendelighet i dagliglivet og at de er kilde til nyttige ferdigheter og kunnskap. Majoriteten av studentene som har valgt engelsk rapporterer at det var nettopp denne nytteverdien – spesielt for fremtidige studier og jobb – som var avgjørende da de valgte engelsk. I tillegg vektlegger elevene at tok sitt valg på bakgrunn av et ønske om å lære det engelske språket bedre, og at de var relativt sikre på at de ville klare en god karakter. Alt i alt passer deres grunner for å ha valgt engelsk godt med en motivasjonsteoretisk retning kalt Expectancy-Value theory.

Det var mindre enighet blant elever som ikke hadde valgt engelsk. Imidlertid virket det som om de fleste av dem kunne forklare sitt valg ved å referere til 1) manglende interesse, 2) manglende talent for språklæring, eller 3) ytre faktorer, som for eksempel problemer med kollisjoner i timeplanen eller opptakskrav for høyere utdanning.

I konklusjonen peker jeg på to følger av studien jeg har gjennomført: Først og fremst foreslår jeg at lærere planlegger en undervisning som tar hensyn til at elever tilsynelatende velger engelske programfag fordi de ønsker å øve på å bruke engelsk språk i en mengde akademiske og profesjonelle situasjoner, og tilrettelegger for at dette ønsket kan bli møtt. For det andre, mener jeg at studiens funn tyder på at lærere og andre utdanningsmyndigheter har en tendens til å anse de engelske programfagene som mindre relevante for elever som har valgt realfag, sammenliknet med språk, samfunnsfag og økonomi. Dette kan være problematisk, særlig fordi elevene selv ikke ser ut til å dele denne holdningen.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Personal anecdote

When I was in upper secondary school I did not like English. I believed it to be a very difficult subject, and was convinced I would never be able to learn it properly. Consequently, I gave up on studying it as soon as it was permitted, which in my case was after my second year. Today, however, I am immensely passionate about the English language and I look forward to teaching it as a school subject. Clearly, something happened which turned the insecure student who dreaded every English class into a person who now plans to dedicate her career to teaching English.

In my case it was a fairly specific experience which initially sparked my passion for English. I was in Prague with my History class, and spent one afternoon talking to a group of holidaying Scots. Through this chance meeting, I realised that I was actually able to communicate in English quite easily, an experience which was surprising and delightful, and which changed my view of both English and of myself. Soon I preferred reading in English over Norwegian, listening to BBC radio rather than NRK, and before I knew it, I was studying English at the University of Oslo.

## 1.2 Purpose

Recalling how my passion for English was sparked by a brief and random encounter, I have become interested in understanding what it is that drives some students to study English, and others to shy away from it. As a teacher-to-be I am determined, if nothing else, to try my best to bring out the potential in my students and to stimulate genuine interest in the subjects I teach. I believe that it will be very helpful to learn about the sentiments students have towards English, and even more importantly, the reasons they have for deciding to study – or not to study – English elective courses. It is not that I believe that teachers should design their lesson plans to suit the whims and demands of every student. However, I assume that an understanding of what students need and expect from studying English is valuable for a future teacher. English elective subjects are quite popular in Norwegian schools, and English has thus far escaped the fate of the other foreign language subjects which struggle with recruitment. However, Norwegian is a small language in a world context, and in order to prevent both intellectual and business-related isolation it is important for Norwegians to develop proficiency in other languages. In this respect, examining why students choose, or

do not choose, English elective subjects has the potential of providing knowledge which can be of use for teachers and others who wish to contribute to the development of Norwegians' foreign language abilities. If combined with competent teachers, such insight might even improve what goes on in the classroom.

In the past, few researchers have focused specifically on choice of English elective subjects in Norwegian upper secondary schools. However, as can be seen below, the present study joins ranks with quite a few studies – both Norwegian and international – of subject choice in *general* and in relation to other school subjects. Because these studies discuss issues which are of relevance to in the present context, a concise review is provided below in sections 1.5-1.5.7.

### 1.3 Researching subject choice

There have not been many Norwegian studies focusing on subject selection in upper secondary school, particularly not since the introduction of the LK06 curriculum in 2006. Furthermore, the few studies available have usually been concerned with Mathematics and/or Science subjects (see for example Ramberg 2006 or Schreiner 2008), and I have not been able to find any newer Norwegian studies which deal with the election of English. Some interesting studies have been published in the UK quite recently (for example Rodeiro 2007; Davis 2004; Wikeley & Stables 1999), but on the whole, these have focused on what determines subject choice in general without reference to specific subjects. Nevertheless, as many of the factors which affect the choice of electives are likely to be universal rather than subject-specific, some such studies have been included in the summary of previous studies below. First, however, I will give a short recount of findings from a pilot study I conducted prior to commencing work on this master thesis. The pilot addressed the same questions as the present study, but on a much smaller scale. Its sample, which was not randomly selected, consisted of 70 upper secondary school students, of which exactly half had studied one or more of the English programme subjects.

### 1.4 Pilot study

In the pilot, as in the present study, subject choice was investigated from two angles. First, I attempted to discover reasons why some students choose to study at least one of the English programme subjects, and secondly, I examined reasons why other students choose not to.

In the pilot study there seemed to be two main explanations for why students had chosen one or more of the English programme subjects. First, students claimed to have chosen English because it was a subject they felt they mastered, and which they consequently believed they would manage a good grade in. Second, there was a focus on English being a useful subject, particularly for future study and/or work. The respondents appeared to value the learning-outcome of studying English because they believe that this outcome has practical applicability in real-life settings.

Apart from the two reasons accounted for above, no other reason for choosing English appeared to be of significant importance in the pilot. I examined whether students who had chosen English were particularly interested in English-speaking literature, culture or linguistics, without discovering any indications to support such a claim. Nor did it seem that students considered themselves pressured – by parents, teachers or others – into studying English. I therefore concluded that for the 35 respondents in my pilot who had studied English, it was common to have chosen English on account of:

- a) the possibility of good grades, and
- b) a regard for the usefulness of being proficient in English.

As shall be seen in chapter 3 below, there is one direction within motivation theory called *Expectancy-Value* theory (see for example Eccles et al. 1983 or Wigfield & Eccles 1992) which fits very well with these results. According to such theories people are likely to engage in an activity if they expect to be successful in performing it, and if the outcome of the activity in question appears of value to them.

Reaching a conclusion regarding pilot study respondents who had not chosen any English programme subjects proved less straightforward. I examined whether these students believed that English was less useful than other students, or if perhaps they had been discouraged from studying English by older students. I also examined whether or not studying English was perceived as difficult or perhaps particularly boring by this group of students. In addition, the study reviewed more practical concerns such as conflicting timetables. Generally, students who had not elected English, either *disagreed* or *neither disagreed nor agreed* to the statements I hypothesised as possible explanations for their choice. Based on these results, I concluded that reasons for not choosing English tend to be

quite individual, and that it was difficult to make any general inferences regarding why these subjects are not elected.

## 1.5 Previous studies of subject choice

The previous section presented the results of the pilot study conducted prior to the present survey. Next, this chapter will continue with a brief account of the results of some other interesting studies of subject choice, conducted both in Norway and abroad.

According to Inge Ramberg (2006), there are three main explanations for subject choice in Norwegian upper secondary school. The explanations, which he conceptualised after studying students' motivation for choosing or not choosing Mathematics and Science subjects, can be summed up as follows:

1. The professionally oriented choice
2. The interest-based choice
3. The hedged choice

Students motivated by professionally oriented choices select subjects which are likely to benefit future study- or career plans. Therefore, their choice can be understood primarily by considering subjects' usefulness for the fulfilment of these plans. In contrast, students displaying an interest-based subject choice choose subjects in which they have a personal interest, and which often brings them both self-confidence and happiness. The third and final category, as posed by Ramberg, is the *hedged* choice, which can be recognised as the choice of students who have not yet decided on which path to follow, but who wish to keep their options open. According to Ramberg, such students will always end up choosing Math and Science subjects because they grant the largest freedom when applying to higher education.

Ramberg's study was concerned with the election of Mathematics and Science subjects, and it is possible that it was this focus which led him to conclude that "the hedged choice" should be treated as a separate stance towards subject choice. Both "the hedged choice" and the "professional choice" can be understood as expressing that subjects are chosen because they will be useful in the future, and perhaps Ramberg would not have separated between them if he had studied for example election of language subjects. If so, we would have been left with two main categories explaining why elective subjects are chosen:

- 1) usefulness for future study and/or work, and
- 2) interest

Several studies have in fact concluded that these are the two most important explanations given by students themselves, when encouraged to explain their choice of subjects. Regularly, as many as 75-80 % of all respondents will agree that one or both of these explanations were “very important” for their choice (Rodeiro 2007; Ibsen & Lie 1990; Christensen 1980).

As will be addressed in Ch.3 *Theory*, there are also recognised motivation theorists who explain choice of actions in ways which resemble the claims presented above. Deci and Ryan (1985) conclude that actions are either *intrinsically* or *extrinsically* motivated, by which they mean that actions are chosen either out of interest and a sense of enjoyment, or out of regards for its utility value. Consequently, in this case, there seems to be correspondence between theory and practice.

### **1.5.1 Interest and usefulness**

In 2007, a study conducted by Carmen L. Vidal Rodeiro, on behalf of Cambridge Assessment, concluded that *interest* was the most important factor for explaining subject choice in English upper secondary schools, closely followed by *usefulness for future study and work*, hereby called *usefulness*. According to this survey of 6597 students in 60 upper secondary schools, slightly more than 80 % rated *interest* in the subject as a very important reason for explaining their choice, while just less than 80 % saw *usefulness* in the same way. Elisabeth Ibsen and Svein Lie (1990) reached a similar conclusion regarding English in-depth courses when they examined why students in Norwegian upper secondary schools chose various language subjects. In their study, 72 % of all students who had chosen English in-depth studies reported interest as a factor of great significance for their choice, while 71 % felt the same about *usefulness*.

It is interesting to note that even though a little more than 7 out of 10 English students believed that English would be useful for future studies and work, a mere 1 in 10 claimed that they chose English because it was required for entrance to a desired programme of higher education. For physics, on the other hand, there is an obvious correlation between usefulness and requirement as approximately 7 in 10 rated both as very important. This indicates that subjects may be perceived as *useful* in different ways, and while Math and

Science subjects may be considered useful because they fulfil entrance requirements, this explanation is not applicable to English.

It should be noted that as Ibsen and Lie's study is more than 20 years old we must display caution towards the applicability of its results today. However, its main findings match those of more recent studies (Ramberg 2006; Rodeiro 2007), which indicate that it is not entirely outdated.

### **1.5.2 Other explanations**

As seen above, several studies conclude that *interest* and perceived *usefulness* are the most important variables when explaining subject choice. However, interest and usefulness are not the only things affecting subject choice, and the following sections will therefore provide a short overview of other factors which should be considered when attempting to understand subject choice.

### **1.5.3 Ability**

In addition to interest and usefulness, studies of choice often highlight *ability* as a third important variable affecting subject election. What this means is that students tend to choose subjects they are good at, and with which they have had success in the past. Wikeley and Stables (1999) concluded that ability was the third most common explanation for subject choice (after *interest* and *usefulness*) both in 1984 and in 1996, and The Cambridge Assessment study from 2007 reached the same conclusion regarding its sample. Hægeland et al. (2007) found strong evidence of a link between grades in lower secondary school and subject choice in upper secondary school, which should be considered further evidence that ability and previous achievement is of consequence for subject choice. As seen above, the respondents of my pilot study largely agreed that their choice had been motivated by the possibility of managing a good result, which can probably be viewed as expressing that these students too chose subjects based at least partially on abilities. Camilla Schreiner (2008) claims that it is quite unlikely for a student who works diligently with a subject, but still fails to make the grade, to remain interested in this subject, and it seems that ability is not only an individual variable which affects choice, but also one of many variables which affect subject liking (Davies et al. 2004).



#### **1.5.4 What creates interest?**

As mentioned above, there are indications that interest may be awakened by ability, and that students typically become interested in subjects they are naturally good at. However, the converse could also be true, as it is likely that students will achieve in subjects they find interesting. In any case, as interest tends to emerge as an important factor for students when they choose elective subjects in, it seems relevant to ask what is it that makes a subject seem interesting in the eyes of a student.

Apart from noting that ability is of consequence for interest, studies of subject choice rarely address which factors create interest in particular subjects. The only exception I have found was a study by Turid Christensen conducted in 1980 for Agder Regional College. Unfortunately, there are several problems with Christensen's study which makes it difficult to claim that her results have any direct relevance for the present thesis. Not only is it more than 30 years old, and consequently concerned with a different school system than the one we have today, its sample is also small and consists of students who all attended the same school. Thus, regardless of the study being outdated, the sample was never representative, and it is therefore difficult to claim any findings as valid for other groups of students than the particular group studied. Despite these limitations, I have decided to give a brief overview of relevant elements from Christensen's work, as it is the only example of a study that attempts to understand what it is that makes subjects interesting in the eyes of students that I have been able to locate.

#### **1.5.5 Turid Christensen's study**

In Christensen's study, more than 3/4 of students specialising in languages agreed that the prospect of being able to communicate across language barriers was very important for explaining why they were interested in studying what they did. In comparison, only about 1/4 of these students claimed that interest in literature was important for their choice, while a mere 10 % stated interest in linguistics and formal aspects of languages as important. If these results are compared to those of my pilot study, it becomes apparent that there are similarities. Like Christensen, I was unable to detect evidence of students being motivated by a particular interest in English speaking literature and/or cultures, while the more practical aspects of learning English were highly valued.

According to Christensen (1980), students specialising in languages did not report to take pleasure in their everyday school work, but had the advantage of experiencing that what they learned was practically applicable in their lives outside of school. Schreiner (2008) reports similar findings. There are thus indications that one of the assets of language subjects is that they are useful outside of school, not only for future study or work, but in the daily lives of students. If we are to believe Christensen (1980) and Schreiner (2008), such everyday usefulness is rarely experienced by Math and Science students, but quite regularly by language – and possibly also social studies – students. It is quite likely that at least for some, motivation for studying English originates from this immediate experience of usefulness.

Even though Christensen's study is both outdated and limited by a small sample, some of its conclusions could still be of relevance. The importance of having a good command of English has certainly increased since 1980, and there is no reason why students today should not value English for the practical skills it provides.

### **1.5.6 Sociological factors**

Camilla Schreiner (2008), who is concerned with subject choice in a sociological perspective, believes that the importance of interest for subject choice must be understood in connection to prevailing ideas in post-industrial societies in which self-actualisation is a main goal in life. According to Schreiner, young people today are concerned with “being true to themselves”, and experience boredom as a personal defeat. Studying subjects that are fun, interesting and exiting is often considered more important than attending to realistic career requirements or societal needs. If Schreiner is correct, this might, at least partially, explain why interest is the most commonly reported explanation of subject choice.

### **1.5.7 External influences**

So far we have seen that personal preferences, both related to interest and plans for the future, as well as ability, have been used to explain subject choice in various studies. Now, however, it is time to focus on the effect of external factors on subject choice. There is agreement among researchers that factors outside of students themselves do influence subject election, however, different studies have made different conclusions with regards to which

factors hold the most sway. Commonly discussed factors include parental education, variations between schools, and the impact of friends and peers.

In Christensen's study (1980), few students report that they were strongly influenced by their parents when choosing in-depth studies, although many say their parents did express preferences regarding their child's choice of specialisation. According to Schreiner (2008) there is little reproduction in choice of study and/or career between parents and children in today's Norway, but young people are still influenced by their parents' educational *level* and *direction*, and often end up choosing similar educational paths. Davies et al. (2004) refer to two contradicting British studies, where one, by Wikeley and Stables (1999) found that parental employment had significant effect on subject choice, while the second study, by Miller and Budd (1999), found no relationship between parental occupations and subject preference. Some studies (Helland 2006; Schreiner 2008; Rodeiro 2007), have indicated that there is a noticeable difference in subject preference between students from lower and higher socioeconomic backgrounds, while Colley and Comber (2003), on the other hand, conclude that the differences are greater between students of different schools than between students of different backgrounds. They suggest that school-related variables are in fact more important than parental influence. In addition, Davies et al. (2004) found substantial variation between schools in the proportion of students studying particular subjects, a variation which could not be explained solely by looking at a student's background. They too concluded that there must be an *institutional effect* influencing subject choice, which is to say that students are affected by the school they attend.

Finally, Rodeiro (2007) found that the most important external factor affecting subject choice – as reported by students themselves – was college requirements, while factors such as liking of teachers and friends' opinions had little or no effect on choice. Christensen (1980) reached the same conclusion regarding the impact of friends, but found evidence of teachers being moderately influential on subject choice. In Ramberg's study (2006), on the other hand, both the liking of teachers and advice from friends, siblings and peers are highlighted as important for explaining subject choice.

## 1.6 Summing up so far

When reviewing different studies of subject choice, there seems to be no unanimous answer to the question of whether or not teachers, parents, or peers affect students' choices, at least

not in ways which the students themselves are aware of. All in all, different studies have reached different conclusions, particularly with regards to what I have called external influences. There are, however, some factors that most studies seem to find important when attempting to explain subject election. The most important factor seems to be interest, closely followed by subjects' usefulness for prospective studies and/or work. Next, studies tend to report ability as the third most important factor affecting subject choice. These variables appear to be relevant regardless of the subject studied. In the remainder of this thesis, however, I will concentrate on explaining the election of *English* subjects in Norwegian upper secondary schools, and consider reasons why some students elect these subjects, while others do not.

The present thesis uses a quantitative method, and all data have been collected through written questionnaires. The main objective of this questionnaire was to let students express factors which they believed to have been of significance for their choice of either to study or not study English in-depth subjects at upper secondary level. Consequently, my data will generally not be reflecting those subconscious influences which may have informed their choice.

## 1.7 Research question

The research question of this thesis is as follows: "What reasons do students themselves give for choosing, or not choosing, one or more of the English programme subjects *International English*, *Social Studies English* and *English Literature and Culture* in Norwegian upper secondary school under the LK06 curriculum?" The particular wording which was chosen for this research question was intended to express exactly what was commented on above, namely that the focus is on what students themselves report, and not on all the external, subconscious or subtle sociological factors which students are not aware of. For reasons which will be discussed further in Chapter 2, Statistics, my study is only concerned with students from state run schools attending the Education programme for General Studies and specialising in General Studies. The respondents were attending their third and final year of upper secondary school when surveyed.

In order to approach the issues outlined above, Chapter 2 will provide a short overview of the Norwegian upper secondary school system, as well as present some informative statistics regarding the position of the English programme subjects to date.

Chapter 3 is a theory chapter, which focuses on motivation theory. Motivation theory includes several aspects which are of relevance when studying subject choice, and is included because it provides a framework within which choice of electives may be discussed. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the methods I have used, while chapter 5 and 6 are dedicated to presenting my results. In chapter 7 I will discuss these results, while chapter 8 will conclude and close this thesis.

## 1.8 Key concepts and definitions

In this thesis I have used “The Norwegian-English dictionary for the education sector” (*Norwegian-English dictionary*, 31.10.2008), published by the Directorate for Education and Training and the Ministry of Education and Research, as source for the translation of words and concepts existing in the LK06 curriculum. Consequently, the translations of these words are not my own. However, for school-related words which can not be found in said dictionary, I am responsible for the wording. For example, I have decided to use *student*, instead of *pupil*, throughout my thesis, as I believe “student” is more appropriate for the individuals in question who have in fact made some conscious choices as to which programmes and subjects they want to *study*.

For the most part, I will refer to elective subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school by the name used in the LK06 curriculum: *Programme subjects*. However, for the sake of variation, these subjects will sometimes be referred to as *electives* or *in-depth studies/in-depth subjects*. Readers who are unfamiliar with the concept of Programme subject and the rules which pertain to choice of such subjects are hereby referred to Chapter 2 for clarification. However, readers who might not be entirely familiar with the Norwegian school system today, will find a brief introduction to some LK06 related words which are in frequent use throughout this study, immediately below. Rather than being introduced in alphabetic order, the concepts are presented in a way which is intended to make them as accessible as possible.

- *Vg1, Vg2, and Vg3* – Norwegian upper secondary school usually consists of three years of study. The first of these is called Vg1, the second is called Vg2, while the third is called Vg3
- *Education programme for General Studies* – The most academically oriented group of study programmes and the only one which automatically awards the right to enter

higher education. Students may choose between three specialisations: Specialisation in General Studies, Specialisation in Music, Dance and Drama or Specialisation in Sports and Physical Education

- *Specialisation in General Studies* – The most comprehensive and academically oriented of the three Education programmes for General Studies, and the focus of this thesis.
- *Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies* and *Programme Area for Natural Sciences and Mathematics Studies* – Every student specialising in General Studies is required to choose between these two programme areas depending on which group of subjects they principally wish to study.
- *Programme subjects* – elective courses usually studied in Vg2 and Vg3. *International English, Social Studies English* and *English Literature and Culture* – the three English programme subjects. Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture may only be studied by students who have completed International English (or otherwise reached the competence aims of International English)

## **2. The English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school – an overview**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will present a brief overview of how the Norwegian school system is organised at the upper secondary school level. The overview is intended to provide information on the practical side of subject choice in order to make the data presented in my results chapter more accessible.

I begin by providing an overview of Norwegian upper secondary education, with focus on the options available to students. I continue by looking more specifically at the regulations for subject choice pertinent to students attending the Education Programme for General Studies *and* specialising in General Studies. The main part of this chapter is dedicated to statistics regarding the number of students registered to any of the three English programme subjects, nationally as well as at county level.

It is important to note that unless anything else is stated, all statistics presented here are for state-run schools only. In addition, I have only included statistics regarding students specialising in General Studies. Most of the statistics presented in this chapter regards the school year 2009-2010, as this was the most recent statistics available at time of writing.

### **2.2 Short overview of Norwegian upper secondary education**

When Norwegian students finish their 10 years of compulsory schooling, nearly all students carry on to upper secondary school. They can choose between 12 different study programmes, which belong either to the Education Programmes for General Studies or Vocational Education Programmes. It is only graduation from the Education Programme for General Studies which awards the right to enter higher education in Norway. For students in study programmes which do not automatically award this right, it is possible to choose a supplementary school year which grants the right to enter college or university (*Analyse av søkertall 2010*, 12.05.2010).

In the Education Programmes for General Studies, students have the opportunity to choose from three different specialisations, with specialisation in General Studies being the

most academically oriented. In order to graduate, students must complete three years of upper secondary school, where the first year is called Vg1, the second year is called Vg2, while the final year is called Vg3.

In Vg2 and Vg3, students on either of the three study programmes belonging to the Education Programmes for General Studies are required to choose elective subjects – or *programme subjects* as they are called. Students who have chosen to *specialise* in General Studies have the highest number of hours to fill with elective subjects. They also have the most extensive list of electives, in English as well as other subjects, to choose between. As this thesis examines subject choice, students specialising in General Studies becomes the natural target group of the study. Consequently, unless anything else is specified, all tables in this chapter display statistics related to students *specialising in General Studies* only. Private schools are excluded from the statistics presented below, as they are from the study sample.

As was also mentioned above, there are three study programmes that are classified as belonging to the Education Programme for General Studies. There are also nine programmes classified as Vocational studies. Table 2.1 below, shows the distribution of students on different study programmes in the school year 2009-2010. Note that the table excludes apprentices.

**Table 2.1** A table showing the distribution of students attending either *Programme for General Studies* or *Vocational Studies* in the school years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, both in actual numbers and in percentages

Study programme	Specialisation	2008-2009 (Vg1-Vg3)	2009-2010 (Vg1-Vg3)
Programme for General Studies	Specialisation in General Studies	68955 (40 %)	68872 (39 %)
	Other specialisation ( <i>Music, Dance and Drama or Sports and Physical Education</i> )	27665 (16 %)	31340 (18 %)
Vocational Studies	All vocational specialisations	75215 (44 %)	76614 (43 %)
<b>In sum:</b>	<b>All specialisations</b>	<b>171835</b>	<b>176826</b>

\* Source: Skoleporten, n.d.

As can be seen above, the largest percentage of Norwegian upper secondary school students attend one of the nine vocational programmes. The most popular single study programme, however, is the education programme for specialisation in General Studies, with approximately 40 % of all Upper secondary school students. In addition, in 2009-2010, approximately 18 % of all students attended either *Programme for Music, Dance and Drama* or *Programme for Sports and Physical Education*.



In order to approach the issue of subject choice among students specialising in General Studies, and to provide a frame for the survey which is the focus of this thesis, this chapter will continue with a brief account of the possibilities of subject choice awarded students specialising in General Studies, as well as the regulations directing the process.

## 2.3 Programme subjects

In Norwegian upper secondary school some subjects, called the *Common Core Subjects*, are obligatory. These subjects, which include the likes of Norwegian and History, are taught for one, two or three years. In addition to the common core subjects, all students specialising in General Studies are required to choose the equivalent of (at least) 840 teaching hours in the course of Vg1-Vg3, from a group of electives called *Programme subjects*. Most of these programme subjects consist of 140 teaching hours (of 60 minutes), and students commonly choose to study three programme subjects in Vg2 and three in Vg3. However, other combinations are also possible (*Fag- og timefordeling i grunnsopplæringen*, 16.06.2010).

All relevant programme subjects are categorised as belonging either to the *Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics Studies* or to the *Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies*. Students must decide which of these two programme areas they wish to major in, and are required to choose the equivalent of at least 560 teaching hours from subjects belonging to “their” programme area. In total, there are 19 subjects belonging to Natural Science and Mathematics Studies, and 38 subjects belonging to Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, most schools are not able to offer all of these subjects, and some might only be offered if there are a certain amount of students interested in forming a class (*Fag- og timefordeling i grunnsopplæringen*, 16.06.2010).

For some programme subjects, such as the English programme subjects, admission to one of the more advanced subjects – in the case of English either *Social Studies English* or *English Literature and Culture* - depends first upon having finished a more basic course – *International English*. For other subjects, such as Biology, students are not required to have studied Biology 1 in order to gain admission to Biology 2 (*Fag- og timefordeling i grunnsopplæringen*, 16.06.2010). Because Social Studies English and English Literature and

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<sup>1</sup> Please consult appendix 2.1 for an overview of these subjects

Culture are generally studied in Vg3, I will regularly refer to these subjects as *Vg3 English programme subjects*, or simply *Vg3 English*. Strictly speaking, this labelling is not entirely accurate, but as can be seen below (table 2.2a) there are very few students who study either of these subjects in Vg1 or Vg2. Consequently it seems practical to make this simplification when writing.

The remaining 280 hours of programme subjects may be chosen from any of the specialisations belonging to the programme for General Studies. However, it is not required that these final 280 hours be chosen outside of one's own programme area, and students are thus free to choose subjects from one programme area only (*Fag- og tidsfordeling i grunnsopplæringen*, 16.06.2010).

## 2.4 English programme subjects

As mentioned, there are three English programme subjects in the Norwegian curriculum, with *International English* being a prerequisite for admission to either *Social Studies English* or *English Literature and Culture*. As table 2.2a below indicates, the largest portion of students who study International English, do so in Vg2. There were, however, 380 students who chose to study International English in Vg3, instead of Vg2 in 2009-2010. In 2008-2009 the number was 550, meaning that there was a decrease of nearly 1/3 in the number of students who chose International English in Vg3 from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010.

**Table 2.2a A table presenting the number of students who were registered as studying either of the three English programme subjects in the school years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The student numbers are divided by subject, year and grade level of the students**

	International English			Social Studies English			English Literature and Culture		
	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3
2008-2009	22	7830	550	4	14	2867	0	12	1940
2009-2010	37	7372	380	0	26	4088	2	12	1720

\* Source: Skoleporten, n.d

As table 2.2a also illustrates, Social Studies English is the most commonly studied of the two Vg3 English programme subjects, with 4088 registered students in 2009-2010. In comparison, English Literature and Culture had 1720 registered students the same school year. The difference in student numbers between the two Vg3 subjects has increased from 927 in 2008-2009, to 2368 students in 2009-2010, indicating that Social Studies English is gaining in popularity, while the opposite is the case for English Literature and Culture. As can be seen in table 2.2b, Social Studies English has actually gained in popularity by 43 %

from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, while the number of students choosing English Literature and Culture decreased by 11% in the same period.

**Table 2.2b A table presenting the change in students studying the three English programme subjects from the school year 2008-2009 to 2009-2010 in percentages, divided by level**

	International English			Social Studies English			English literature and culture		
	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3	Vg1	Vg2	Vg3
Change in percent	68 %	-6 %	-31 %	-100%	86 %	43 %	200%	-	-11%

\*Source: Skoleporten, n.d.

As far as I can tell from statistics provided by the Directorate for Education and Training (personal communication with Hilde Hjorth-Johansen, 17.11.2010), there were 247 state run upper secondary schools in Norway offering the Education Programme for specialisation in General Studies in 2008-2010. Furthermore, 243 of these taught one or more of the English programme subjects these school years. The vast majority of schools offer both International English and one or both of the subsequent Vg3 subjects, meaning that most students specialising in General Studies have the opportunity to choose in-depth studies in English.

According to the Directorate for Education and Training (personal communication, 17.11.2010), 54 % of the schools that taught English programme subjects in the school year 2009-2010, offered both International English and Social Studies English. The second most frequent combination, found at slightly less than 1/4 of all schools, was to offer all three English programme subjects. A combination of International English and English Literature and Culture comes in third place with almost 18 %, while a mere 5 % of all relevant schools taught International English as a stand-alone subject. There were also two schools, or slightly less than 1 percent, that taught Vg3 English only. At the latter schools there were no students studying International English in 2009-2010.

In order to compose a more detailed picture of the status of the English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary schools, the following sections will examine data related to the three English programme subjects in greater detail. I will start by looking at International English, before moving on to the Vg3 subjects.

## 2.4.1 International English

International English was the second most popular programme subject for General Studies in 2009-2010, passed only by *Sociology and Social Anthropology* (*Elevers fagvalg*, 20.04.10)<sup>2</sup>.

As can be seen in table 2.3 below, approximately 1/3 of the Vg2 students specialising in General Studies chose International English in the school years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

**Table 2.3 A table presenting a) the number of students attending the Education Programme for specialisation in General Studies, b) the number of students registered as studying International English, and c) the percentage of all students studying International English, for the school years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010**

	2008-2009	2009-2010
Number of students specialising in General Studies (Vg2-level)	22 194	22 260
Number of students who study International English (Vg2-level)	7830	7372
Percentage of students choosing International English	35 %	33 %

\*Source: *Skoleporten*, n.d.

Table 2.3 above indicates that there has been a decrease of 2 % in the number of students registered as studying International English from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. This must be regarded as a fairly modest decline, which could easily be coincidental. However, it might still be worth monitoring, as the most popular programme subject, *Sociology and Social Anthropology* (*Elevers fagvalg*, 20.04.10)<sup>3</sup>, actually increased its student number by 11 % in the same period, and the third most popular subject, *Mathematics R1*, declined by 1 % only.

On a national basis, around 1/3 of all students choose international English in Vg2. When checking for geographical variations, it becomes apparent that the differences between the 19 counties (see table 2.4 below) are generally minor. Only Nordland stands out as having a considerably lower share of International English students, with approximately 1/5, instead of 1/3 of the relevant student mass in 2009-2010. The largest proportion could be found in Sør-Trøndelag, where just above 41 % chose International English (*Skoleporten*, n.d.)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.udir.no/upload/Statistikk/Elevers\\_fagvalg\\_i\\_vgo\\_2009\\_2010.pdf](http://www.udir.no/upload/Statistikk/Elevers_fagvalg_i_vgo_2009_2010.pdf) , visited 20.11.2010. The information available here regards all students, regardless of programme affiliation, and consequently the numbers are slightly different from those presented in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=02&vurderingsomrade=fed86d60-df13-45c8-a544-457b84fc8216&skoletype=1&underomrade=777215a2-ef6-4245-951d-c2632fdd384e&sammenstilling=11&fordeling=0#rapport> (21.11.2010)

**Table 2.4** A table showing the share of students, in percent, of the total student body who were registered as studying International English in 2009-2010, distributed by county

County	Percentage of relevant Vg2 students registered as studying International English (2009-2010)
Sør-Trøndelag	41 %
Oppland	39 %
Oslo	38 %
Troms	36 %
Telemark	36 %
Møre og Romsdal	35 %
Aust-Agder	35 %
Finmark	35 %
Buskerud	34 %
Nord-Trøndelag	33 %
Vestfold	33 %
Hordaland	33 %
Akershus	33 %
Sogn og Fjordane	31 %
Hedmark	31 %
Østfold	30 %
Vest-Agder	29 %
Rogaland	28 %
Nordland	20 %
<b>Mean</b>	<b>33 %</b>

\*Source: *Skoleporten*, n.d.

## 2.4.2 Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture

If we consider the number of students who chose International English at Vg2 level in 2008-2009, and compare that figure to the number of students who elected either Social Studies English or English Literature and Culture in Vg3 in 2009-2010, we can estimate approximately how many students choose full in-depth studies in English. It will not be exactly the same students included in both numbers, as some students drop out of school, while others return, but it should provide a fairly accurate estimate. Table 2.5 below provides the information (*Skoleporten*, n.d.).

**Table 2.5** A table presenting an estimation of the percentage of students who chose International English in Vg2 and went on to study one of the subsequent English subjects in Vg3

Subject	Number
International English Vg2 (08-09)	7830
Social Studies English or English Literature and Culture Vg3 (09-10)	5808
<b>Percentage of students choose Vg2 and Vg3</b>	<b>74 %</b>

\* Source: *Skoleporten*, n.d

Table 2.5 indicates that roughly 3/4 of students who choose International English in Vg2, continue with one of the two Vg3 English subjects. It should be noted, however, that this table has not taken into consideration the possibility that some students follow both Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture. Even though this is a valid combination of programme subjects, there are few students who opt for this solution. In addition, the table

does not include pupils who chose International English in Vg1, or pupils who choose one of the two Vg3-courses in Vg1 or Vg2. However, there are very few students who do so (see table 2.2a), and excluding these pupils should not greatly distort the statistics.

In other words, approximately 3/4 of students who study International English in Vg2 carry on with Vg3 English. Table 2.6 below, shows the percentage of *all* students specialising in General Studies who choose full English in-depth studies at the county level (*Skoleporten*, n.d). Møre- og Romsdal figures on top of this table, as approximately 1/3 of the students in this county chose English both in Vg2 and Vg3. The county with the lowest percentage of students studying English both in Vg2 and Vg3 was Østfold, where only 1/5 of the students did so. Rogaland, Hedmark, Oslo and Nordland present only marginally higher numbers of students choosing full in-depth studies of English. On the whole though, the geographical variations must be said to be quite small.

**Table 2.6 A table showing the percentage of the total amount of students specialising in General Studies registered as studying either Social Studies English or English Literature and Culture in 2009-2010, distributed by county**

<b>Counties</b>	<b>% of relevant students registered as having studied either Social Studies English or English Literature and Culture (2009-2010)</b>
Møre – og Romsdal	33 %
Finnmark	30 %
Sør-Trøndelag	29 %
Telemark	29 %
Buskerud	29 %
Vest-Agder	28 %
Hordaland	28 %
Aust-Agder	28 %
Sogn – og Fjordane	28 %
Troms	26 %
Vestfold	26 %
Oppland	25 %
Nord-Trøndelag	25 %
Akershus	22 %
Nordland	21 %
Hedmark	21 %
Oslo	21 %
Rogaland	20 %
Østfold	20 %
<b>Mean</b>	<b>26 %</b>

\*Source: *Skoleporten*, n.d.

When calculating the mean percentage of students in our 19 counties who chose full in-depth studies in English, we find that 26 %, or slightly more than one in four of all relevant students, did so. At country level, i.e. without first grouping by county, the mean is slightly lower, with approximately 24 % of students studying one of the two Vg3 English programme subjects in 2009-2010 (5808 out of 23 982 students). In comparison, 9076 out of 23982

relevant students, or nearly 38%, were registered as studying either of the two Vg3 Mathematics subjects (Mathematics R2 or Mathematics S2) in the same school year (*Skoleporten*, n.d).

As displayed in table 2.2a above, there have been greater numbers of students choosing Social Studies English than English Literature and Culture during the previous school years. It could therefore be interesting to look more closely at the differences in student numbers between the two subjects at county-level. Table 2.7 displays an overview of the percentage of students, divided by county, who were registered as studying the two English Vg3 subjects in 2009-2010.

**Table 2.7 A table showing the share of students, in percent, of the total student mass who studied a) Social Studies English and b) English Literature and Culture in 2009-2010, divided by county**

Counties	Social Studies English (% of all relevant students)	Counties	English Literature and Culture (% of all relevant students)
Møre- og Romsdal	22 %	Nord-Trøndelag	13 %
Finnmark	22 %	Aust-Agder	12 %
Oppland	21 %	Telemark	12 %
Buskerud	21 %	Hordaland	11 %
Sør-Trøndelag	20 %	Møre- og Romsdal	10 %
Troms	20 %	Vest-Agder	10 %
Sogn og Fjordane	20 %	Sør-Trøndelag	9 %
Østfold	18 %	Hedmark	9 %
Vest-Agder	18 %	Vestfold	8 %
Vestfold	18 %	Buskerud	8 %
Telemark	18 %	Finnmark	8 %
Hordaland	17 %	Sogn og Fjordane	8 %
Rogaland	17 %	Oslo	7 %
Aust-Agder	16 %	Akershus	7 %
Akershus	15 %	Troms	6 %
Nordland	15 %	Nordland	6 %
Oslo	14 %	Oppland	4 %
Hedmark	12 %	Rogaland	3 %
Nord-Trøndelag	11 %	Østfold	2 %
<b>Mean</b>	<b>18 %</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>8 %</b>

\*Source: Personal communication, 17.11.2010

As we can see, the percentage of students studying Social Studies English in 2009-2010 varies from 11 % in Nord-Trøndelag to 22 % in Møre - og Romsdal. The average is 18 %. In comparison, the average percentage of students studying English Literature and Culture in Vg3 is only 8 %.

It is interesting to note that even though Nord-Trøndelag has the lowest percentage of students choosing Social Studies English, it figures on top when it comes to English

Literature and Culture, with 13 % of all relevant students choosing this subject. It is also the only county with more students choosing to study English Literature and Culture than Social Studies English. In comparison, Østfold is the county where the lowest percentage of students choose English Literature and Culture, with less than 2 % of the relevant students. However, only two out of eight schools offering specialisation in General Studies taught English Literature and Culture in Østfold in 2009-2010, which may at least to some extent explain the modest portion of students choosing this subject.

## 2.5 Summing up

To summarise, the data presented in this chapter has shown that approximately 1/3 of all students specialising in General Studies choose International English in Vg2. Very few students study this subject in Vg1, and only some students choose to study it in Vg3. In fact, the latter group has decreased by 31 % from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010.

This chapter has also shown that 3/4 of the students who choose International English in Vg2 continue studying English in Vg3. All in all, about 1/4 of all students specialising in General Studies choose English both in Vg2 and in Vg3. Of the Vg3 English programme subjects Social Studies English is the most commonly studied of the two, and it is also more commonly taught than English Literature and Culture. The gap between the two subjects have increased quite dramatically from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, and due to the discrepancy in student numbers it seems fair to suggest that English Literature and Culture is a less conventional choice than Social Studies English.

As mentioned, approximately 1/3 of all students specialising in General Studies choose to study at least one English programme subject, which means that approximately 2/3 of all students never study any English programme subjects. This thesis is not only concerned with reasons why the English programme subjects are chosen, but also with reasons why they are *not*. Therefore, one whole chapter, Ch.6 *Results B*, is dedicated to examining the questionnaire response pertaining to reasons for not choosing English. Focusing both on why English is chosen *and* why it is not should help improve our understanding of subject choice, as it focuses on aspects both in favour of, and against, choosing English. This should illuminate the deliberations students make when choosing their subjects. Before examining this, however, in the next chapter I include a more theoretical approach to subject choice, conceptualised through a review of motivation theory.



## 3. Theory

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt an overview of main theories within motivation research with particular focus on theories relating to language learning and subject choice. I will start by arguing why a review of motivation research is relevant to a study of subject choice. Next, I will review several important individual theories of motivation, all of which may contribute to an increased understanding of subject choice. Finally, I will present the so-called *Process model of L2 motivation*, a theory which attempts to synthesise ideas from the major motivation theories in order to create one comprehensive model addressing L2 motivation in particular. The chapter concludes with a summary of its main points.

### 3.2 Why motivation?

In colloquial speech *motivation* is regularly seen as expressing the *reason why* we chose to perform a particular action. However, according to Zoltan Dörnyei (2001), one of the few things most motivation researchers can agree upon is that motivation concerns both *direction* and *magnitude* of human behaviour. Consequently, motivation is responsible not only for explaining why people choose to do X, but also for how long and how hard they are willing to pursue it (Dörnyei 2001). In a study such as this one, where the focus is solely on the reasons why a particular choice was made, we are not actually studying motivation – merely the *part of* motivation related to choice. However, as we shall see below, there are still several motivation theories which can inform a study of choice only, using the theory either in full, or the parts of it which are applicable. What these theories can offer is a framework within which subject choice may be discussed, and a vocabulary which will make this discussion more precise. In short, a review of main motivation theories is both appropriate and useful when examining subject choice.

### 3.3 Defining motivation

The term motivation presents a real mystery. It is one of those words which is used in everyday language as well as in academic writing. However, even though it is quite commonly used, there is, according to Dörnyei (2001) little agreement as to its content. In collaboration with Istvan Ottó he attempts the following definition:

[Motivation is] the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out. (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998, as cited in Dörnyei 2001:9)

The term *motivation* is derived from the Latin verb *movere*, meaning to move (Eccles and Wigfield 2002), and although motivation has been defined in many different ways, depending on the theoretical grounds of the definition, the aspect of movement is often included in one way or another. It can be seen in Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998, as cited in Dörnyei 2001) definition offered above, and also in the definition offered by Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2008:4), which is shorter: "Motivation is the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained". Motivation is seen as a *primum movens* in both of the two definitions, instigating, as well as maintaining, action and drive. As noted above, due to issues of space and relevancy, this review will only be concerned with the process of instigation, leaving aspects of change over time to others.

## 3.4 Theory

The theories presented below have been selected because they are recognised as central contributors to a discussion of motivation, some in relation to achievement activities in general, while others are specifically developed with the learning of languages in mind. I will start by looking at what was perhaps the most important motivation theory of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least within a second (and foreign) language learning context. It is the motivational theory of the Canadian Robert C. Gardner.

### 3.4.1 Gardner's theory of motivation

Robert C. Gardner was one of the first researchers on second language acquisition who empirically studied the effect of motivation on language learning (Schauer 2009). He conducted his research in bilingual Canada, and developed *the Socio-educational model of second language acquisition*, a model "concerned with the role of various individual difference characteristics of the student in the learning of a L2" (Dörnyei 2001:51).

Gardner claims that languages are unlike any other subject taught in school, in that they involve the acquisition of skills or behaviour patterns which belong to another cultural community than the learner's own. As a consequence, the relative success of learning a second language will, according to Gardner, be influenced to some extent by individuals'

attitudes toward the other community (1985:146). Therefore, in his model, it is not only factors such as intelligence, language aptitude and situational anxiety which determine achievement, but also feelings and attitudes towards the target language group (Gardner 1985).

The Socio-educational model of second language acquisition has been one of the most influential theories there is on motivation and language learning (Oxford 1996). However, as it focuses on the effect various social, psychological and motivational factors have on *acquisition*, the details of the theory are not relevant in the present context and will not be discussed further (see Gardner 1979 or Gardner 1985 for details). Nevertheless, there are other aspects of Gardner's work which are relevant to a study of initial motivation for choosing language subjects in school, and they are reviewed immediately below.

### 3.4.2 Gardner and orientations

In relation to language learning in school, Gardner states that motivation is a composite of effort, the desire to achieve a goal (or *want*) and favourable attitudes towards the relevant learning activity (or *affect*). In his view, a goal – let us say for a Norwegian student to become as near fluent as possible in English – is to be understood as the stimulus which gives rise to motivation, but should not be regarded as motivation in itself (Gardner 1985). According to Gardner, what is interesting is the reason *why* it is important for a student to reach this goal, i.e. become fluent. This reason can be viewed as an ultimate goal of the language learning activity, and it is possible, Gardner says, to organise the ultimate goal of different language learners into *orientations*. Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduce two groups of orientations (or groups of goals) based on empirical research conducted in Canada. They named them *integrative* and *instrumental* orientations. Dörnyei has summarised the content of each of the two orientations:

*Integrative orientation* concerns a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community; it was defined in Gardner and Lambert's (1959:271) pioneering study as the willingness to be 'like valued members of the language community'.

*Instrumental orientation* is the utilitarian counterpart of integrative orientation in Gardner's theory, pertaining to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary.

(Dörnyei 2001:49)

Gardner's use of orientation, instead of motivation, to explain why a person chooses to learn a language is sensible as it can be used regardless of motivational force. In the setting of Norwegian upper secondary school, students are made to choose subjects regardless of their passion for studying them. For some, electing English might be a question of the lesser evil. Therefore, orientation, as defined by Gardner, might actually be more accurate than motivation when considering subject choice.

Critics have said that it is difficult to apply Gardner's theory, which was created to explain second language learning, to contexts such as the Norwegian where there is no real contact between students and the target language group. They argue that learning a new language within a community where the second language target group is present in close proximity of the learner differs widely from a context where the learners have no physical contact with speakers of the language being learned (Dörnyei 1990).

Clément and Kruidenier (1983) were among the first to suggest that both proximity to L2 communities and differences in learning environment might actually affect both motivation and orientation. They, too, conducted their studies in Canada, but included learners of English and French from communities where there was little real contact with speakers of the studied language. In addition, they included students learning Spanish, a language not spoken frequently in the country. They identified four orientations which seemed to be common to all groups of learners regardless of proximity to target groups, and one which only applied to Canadians learning Spanish, i.e. learners of an entirely foreign language. Of the orientations identified by Clément and Kruidenier, one, the instrumental orientation, was identical to Gardner's. The remaining three "universal" orientations, however, differed from his proposition. According to Clément and Kruidenier, students frequently learned languages so that they would be able to interact with people while travelling. They identified this as *the travel orientation*. A second orientation could be identified as *the friendship orientation*, with people seeking friends across language barriers. The third "new" orientation was named *the knowledge orientation*, and refers to people seeking out new knowledge and information through learning a language. The orientation identified as particular to people learning a foreign was called *the socio-cultural orientation*, and refers to individuals who seek greater knowledge of the cultural and/or artistic productions of a target group. The orientation is perhaps similar to Gardner's integrative orientation in some ways, but Clément and Kruidenier do not consider them to be identical. The socio-cultural orientation lacks the affective connotation of the integrative orientation,

and is in a way more “bookish”, or intellectually distant, than the integrative orientation (Clément and Kruidenier 1983).

Dörnyei (1990) agrees with Clément and Kruidenier in that learning contexts affect orientation. He believes that in a European setting, where English is the official language of numerous professions and academic fields, and at the same time the language most frequently used between people not speaking the same language, one should not be surprised to find orientations towards language learning that diverge from those found in bilingual Canada. Dörnyei (1990) studied Hungarian learners of English in an attempt to establish orientations which are common amongst European learners of English. The study, although conducted in 1985-86, does still, at least partially, seem relevant for a Norwegian present-day context: Among the five orientations Dörnyei discovered in his material, one is quite clearly reflected in the present Norwegian syllabus for the English programme subjects. The orientation in question is called *Desire for knowledge and values associated with English*, and describes people who regard knowledge of English as a requirement for keeping up-to-date and avoiding intellectual provincialism. It seems the policy makers of Norwegian education agree that this is one of the reasons why students should learn English, as the following statement is included in the introduction to the syllabus for the English programme subjects: *The ability to participate in social life and working life, both nationally and internationally, is becoming increasingly dependent on having a command of English at an advanced high level.*<sup>5</sup> I believe this sentence reflects a view of English where being proficient in the language is seen as an important tool for staying in tune with the rest of the world.

The remaining four orientations found in Dörnyei’s study are as follows: 1) *Instrumentality*, which, like in Gardner’s theory, concerns pragmatic and/or professional utility reasons for studying English; 2) *Interest in foreign languages and cultures*, which is similar both to Gardner’s integrative motive (but without specific reference to a target language community) and Clément and Kruidenier’s sociocultural orientation; 3) *desire to spend some time abroad*, which resembles the travel orientation of Clément and Kruidenier, and 4) *learning English as a new challenge* (Dörnyei 1990). As the orientations he found are similar to those of Clément and Kruidenier, Dörnyei believes in the existence of orientations

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<sup>5</sup>[http://www.udir.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte\\_lareplaner\\_for\\_Kunnskapsloeftet/english/Languages/English\\_programme\\_subject.rtf](http://www.udir.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloeftet/english/Languages/English_programme_subject.rtf) (visited 09.11.2010)

towards language learning that are valid across various demographic areas, and for more than one target language.

Gardner's theory of motivation has inspired several other researchers to conduct their own studies of reasons for learning a second or foreign language. Therefore, we will return to Gardner's theory of orientations further below, in section 3.4.7, in connection with Kimberly A. Noels' (2001) attempt to synthesize his ideas with the ideas of Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985). First, however, we shall turn our attention to another of the important directions within motivation theory in achievement settings, more specifically, Expectancy-Value theories.

### **3.4.3 Expectancy-Value theory**

The following section focus on Expectancy-Value theory – exemplified through Eccles et al (1983). Expectancy-Value theories are, as most other cognitive theories, of the belief that humans are born as active and curious learners, with an innate sense of motivation. The main issue of these theories is therefore not to examine *what* motivates learners, but rather *what directs and shapes* our inherent motivation. As can be understood from the label given to such theories, their two main elements are expectancy (of success) and (task) value (Dörnyei 2001). The greater the expectancy and value of success, the higher a person's motivation should be for the task in question. Conversely, people are not likely to display high motivation in performing tasks which they do not believe they will succeed in, and which lead to outcomes that are of little value to them (Dörnyei 2001). Newer Expectancy-Value theories focus on broad psychological, social and cultural settings, and on how such determinants affect individuals and their choice of which tasks to engage in. One of these theories is the focus of the section which follows immediately below.

### **3.4.4 Eccles et al. and their Expectancy-Value theory**

The Eccles et al. Expectancy-Value theory (1983) is probably the expectancy-value theory which has generated the most research on academic achievement in classroom settings (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008). The theory, which was proposed by Eccles and her colleagues in 1983, offers a comprehensive, but organized, model which is useful for discussing the relationship between expectancy, value and choice. The model, which can be

seen in full in Appendix 3.1, is fairly extensive, but a summary of its main points are included immediately below.

Acknowledging that expectancy and value do not materialise out of thin air, the Eccles et al. model (1983) provides an overview of factors which contribute to their development. Both expectancies and values are influenced by beliefs regarding personal competence, task difficulty, and how well the task in question relates to personal goals. These variables are in turn influenced by our perception of our socialisers' beliefs and attitudes, and stereotypes tied to the activity in question. In addition, our experiences with, and perception of, previous achievements will also affect both expectancies and values.

In short, the model proposed by Eccles et al. illustrates how our surrounding social environments affects the formation of our expectancies and values (Wigfield & Eccles 1992), and shape the way we think and act. It reminds us of the importance of both parents and teachers as socialisers upon the choices students make, as well as the impact of friends, other students and general social beliefs and norms on the process of subject choice.

### **3.4.5 A broader definition of task value**

According to Wigfield and Eccles, the most important aspect of the Eccles et al. model regards its discussion of four main types of value (Wigfield & Eccles 1992: 15). *Attainment value* can be defined as personal importance of doing well on a particular task. This importance is linked to an experience of self and to a task's relevance for confirming or disconfirming salient aspects of this self. According to Eccles et al. attainment value will be higher for tasks we experience as being in accordance with our self-image (Eccles et al. 1983; Wigfield & Eccles 1992; Eccles & Wigfield 2002), and lower if they conflict.

A second type of value discussed by Eccles et al. (1983) is the *intrinsic value* which refers to pure task enjoyment. If a particular task has intrinsic value then the person performing this task does so because it awards pleasure, not in order to fulfil some external purpose. Tasks which are valued for their *utility*, however, are performed as means to an end, as they are perceived as valuable because they may facilitate the reaching of important goals (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). The last of the four types of values in Eccles' model is called *cost*. Eccles and her colleagues conceptualise costs in terms of it being the negative aspects of engaging in a particular task. Selecting one activity regularly means excluding others, which must be considered a cost of choosing. In addition, negative emotions such as stress or anxiety associated with a task which otherwise brings positive results, should also be

regarded as cost. When making choices we usually factor in the costs related to the particular activity, in order to assess whether or not positive benefits are outweighed by negative costs (Wigfield & Eccles 1992; Eccles & Wigfield 2002).

Categories such as the attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value and cost should prove useful when attempting to describe reasons students have for choosing their programme subjects. If nothing else, they provide a vocabulary through which it is possible to describe task value in more detail, which is how I use these concepts in Ch.7 *Discussion*.

### **3.4.6 Self-determination**

In a discussion of motivation theory, it seems pertinent to briefly mention the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1985). Deci and Ryan observe that people are moved to act by very different reasons, and their agenda is to investigate the innate psychological needs which form the basis for motivation. Their theory regards the extent to which individuals view themselves as autonomous when choosing course of action, as opposed to being controlled or pressured into making certain choices. According to the theory, there are three basic innate psychological needs that underlie behaviour – the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness. If these needs are fulfilled there is great potential for an individual to feel self-determined.

The part of Deci and Ryan's theory which is interesting in the present context, and which can be used in a discussion of subject choice in Norwegian schools, relate to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. When people are *intrinsically* motivated they choose the activities they believe will provide enjoyment and a feeling of competence. Such activities are appealing due to the positive feelings participation brings about in the individual. According to Deci and Ryan, intrinsic motivation appears when the aforementioned innate psychological needs are met (Deci & Ryan 1985).

To explain participation in activities which do not create positive emotions and feelings of competence and joy in the individual, Deci and Ryan use the concept *extrinsic* motivation. Extrinsically motivated behaviour is performed for reasons other than pure pleasure, typically as means to an end. According to Deci and Ryan, extrinsic motivation can vary along a continuum of less to greater self-determination depending on how externally controlled an individual perceives herself as being. On one end of this scale we find intrinsic motivation, while if we start on the opposite end, we find *amotivation*. Between amotivation



and intrinsic motivation there are four different kinds of extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci 2000).

Amotivation is used to describe people who either do not act at all or act without intent. In a context of subject choice in school, an amotivated person might be someone who fails to submit her request for which subjects she would like to follow, and consequently is placed in random classes. *External regulation* is the least self-determined of the extrinsic motivations. People who are characterised by this motivational type generally act because they have been promised a reward, or in order to avoid punishment. Slightly more self-determined is the extrinsic motivation is called *introjected regulation*. People characterised by this type of motivation generally act in order to avoid guilt or anxiety, or in order to feel pride. *Identified regulations* is the second most self-determined of the extrinsic motivations, and people classified within this category act because they value a goal or outcome of acting. For instance, a student may choose to study for an exam because she recognises that knowing the reading material can prove useful in the future, even though the studying in itself is boring and hard work. The last of the extrinsic motivations, which is quite similar to intrinsic motivation, is called *integrated regulations*. Integration occurs when a person performs a certain activity because it has been evaluated and synchronised with ones' other values and needs. However, this is still an extrinsic motivation, because the activity is not performed due to the inherent pleasure it produces (Dörnyei 2001).

Studies have shown that the more externally regulated students are, the less they show interest and effort towards achievement in a particular subject (Ryan & Connell 1989). Furthermore, there are also indications that children who are more intrinsically motivated in school show higher levels of achievement and lower levels of anxiety (Gottfried 1982, 1985). These are interesting effects, but will not be discussed further as they lay outside the scope of my study. It is Deci and Ryan's use of categories for grouping motivation which make them relevant for a study of subject choice. Their self-determination theory can also be combined with Gardner's and Clément's theories of orientation, into an, in this context, even more useful and interesting view of motivation.

### **3.4.7 Kimberley A. Noels**

Kimberley A. Noels has combined the elements of Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory with elements from Gardner's and Clément and Kriudénier's views of orientations, in order to gain a more complete understanding of language learning motivation (Noels 2001).

She says that even though they never use the term, it is reasonable to think of the constructs Deci and Ryan call extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and amotivation as *orientations*. This is in accordance with Ryan's statement that the types of regulations which enter into the abovementioned motivational categories "reflect variations in the orientation of motivation but not necessarily its *level* or amount" (Ryan 1995:408). By synthesising the thoughts of Gardner and Clément & Kruidenier with Deci & Ryan, Noels create a new framework which may come in handy when explaining reasons why people engage in language courses.

In addition to using the extrinsic categories already suggested by Deci and Ryan, Noels also identifies three types of intrinsic orientations in order to better describe variables she believes to exist within intrinsically motivated action (see for example Vallerand 1997). The first of these orientations is the *intrinsic knowledge*-orientation, which refers to the experience of pleasure stemming from gaining knowledge and satisfying one's curiosity. Secondly, there is the *intrinsic accomplishment*-orientation, which refers to enjoyable sensations associated with mastering difficult tasks and reaching new achievements. Finally, the third and last of the intrinsic orientations can be called *intrinsic stimulation*-orientation, and refers to enjoyment stemming from the experience of aesthetic pleasure. Noels interviewed students of Spanish at a university in California regarding their motivation for language learning, and found evidence of students displaying all four of the extrinsic orientations, as well as the three intrinsic orientations and the amotivational orientation in her sample.

Noels states that the use of intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation as orientations is not meant to exclude Gardner's two original orientations completely. However, seems most of Gardner's concept of instrumental orientation can be covered by the four extrinsic orientations as suggested by Deci and Ryan, and it has also been suggested (Soh 1987) that the integrative orientation can be covered by intrinsic orientations. Still, Noels believe that the integrative orientation includes issues of social identity which neither extrinsic nor intrinsic orientations cover, and as she found respondents in her sample who expressed obvious integrative motives for learning Spanish, her conclusion is that the integrative orientation must be regarded as an orientation in its own right (Noels 2001). In any case, Noel's use of orientations is interesting, and her theory seems highly relevant for a discussion of subject choice.

### 3.5 Summing up so far

So far this chapter has accounted for different theories of motivation and of how individuals are motivated to choose course of action. The theories which have been presented are all fairly well researched and well-known within the area of motivation, and have proven very helpful when constructing the questionnaire used in the present study. In addition, I will return to the theories here presented Ch.7 *Discussion*, which draws heavily on the ideas discussed above. However, before this chapter concludes, there is one final motivation theory which shall be presented. It was proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), in an attempt to counteract what they believe to be the major weakness of motivation theory: a lack of comprehensiveness. According to them, existing motivation theories are not necessarily conflicting, but rather addressing small pieces of a larger picture, without acknowledging that they are in fact linked to other models. As a reaction, they felt compelled to create their very own theory of L2 motivation which attempts to consolidate all major motivation theories – both related to L2 learning specifically and mainstream psychology in general – in order to create one complete and comprehensive model. The result was *the Process model of L2 motivation*, which will be examined immediately below.

### 3.6 Dörnyei and Ottó's process theory of L2 motivation

According to Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) most motivation research focus on a relatively small number of variables, which naturally leads to a somewhat reductionist outcome. The pair wanted to counteract this reductionism by creating a model which makes use of the principal components of a great number of recognised motivation theories, and incorporate them into a larger framework. In this way they hoped to create a comprehensive model which could avoid reductionism, and explain much of the variance in human behaviour (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998).

In addition to the issue of lacking comprehensiveness, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) criticise previous motivation theories for forgetting that motivation is dynamic and changes over time. In order to address this critique, they have divided their model into three phases – *the preactional phase, the actional phase and the post-actional phase* – as a means for organising motivation as it develops over time. When, as in the context of the present study, one is looking solely at reason for choosing to instigate language studies, the preactional phase is most relevant. Fortunately, because of the way they have organised it, Dörnyei and

Ottó's model is versatile, and may be consulted as a source of information even when one is not studying the complete life cycle of motivational impulses.

Due to the focus of my study, and in interests of space, I will only present the preactional phase of Dörnyei and Ottó's model in my thesis. Nevertheless, an overview of the model with all its phases is included as Appendix 3.2. However, as this model does not display full details of the motivational influences affecting the three phases, please consult Dörnyei (2001) or Dörnyei and Otto (1998) for a complete overview.

### **3.6.1 The preactional phase of the Process model of L2 motivation**

According to Dörnyei (2001), the preactional phase of the Process model aims to explain decision-making. As it is concerned with how a person comes to choose which actions to pursue, it seems highly relevant to include in a study of subject choice.

The preactional phase itself is divided into three separate operations, which can occur quite rapidly one after the other, or with time passing in between. The first of these sub-phases is called *the goal setting phase*. In this phase a person's wishes, hopes, desires and opportunities are combined and formulated into a goal. However, humans harbour many hopes and dreams which they never act upon, and as we shall see below, we are influenced by several determinants before settling on the goals we actually pursue. According to Dörnyei and Ottó's model, goals are not considered to be the direct instigator of action, but rather an indispensable step in "the motivated behaviour sequence" (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998:49). Therefore, the second of the preactional phases is needed in order to bring us closer to realising our aspirations. When an individual is set on a goal, she may move into the *intention formation phase*, where, as the name states, an intention is brought into being. Dörnyei and Ottó use *intention* as something more forceful than a goal in that intentions always involve commitment to perform a particular task. This commitment is crucial, but still not sufficient, for explaining choice in the model. In order to reach the stage where a particular action is initiated, a person must move into the third and final of the preactional phases called *the initiation of intention enactment phase*.

As mentioned above, Dörnyei and Ottó believe that we must always consider many different influences before we will be able to explain why some goals and intentions are brought into being, while others are not. According to the pair, it is this insistence which is the most important element of their theory (Dörnyei 2001). In the following I will review the

motivational influences included in Dörnyei and Ottó's model using the example of a student choosing programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school.

According to Dörnyei and Ottó's model there are four main motivational factors underlying the goal setting phase. Let us imagine a student who may or may not choose to elect the programme subject *International English* in Vg2 of Norwegian upper secondary school. According to the model, this student's choice will first of all be affected by her *subjective values and norms*. These values and norms have developed in reaction to previous experiences, and are tied to the person's self-schema. According to Dörnyei (2001), in a language learning context these beliefs regard basic feelings and attitudes towards the language in question, and towards cross-cultural communication. If our student possesses negative emotions towards studying languages in general, and perhaps dislikes the activity of communicating in a foreign language, then it is not very likely that she will formulate the goal of choosing International English as one of her programme subjects. If, on the other hand, her values and norms are positive or neutral towards language learning, she might still consider doing so.

The second and third factors affecting goal formation are borrowed from expectancy-value theories. Whether or not our wishes, dreams and hopes are formulated into goals will depend on the values associated with, in this case, the activity of taking an in-depth English class, and the expectancy of achieving (or not achieving) this goal. As Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) see it, the expectancies are quite general at this point in time, relating to the physical possibility of reaching said goal, and not to personal attributes needed to be successful in performing goal-specific tasks. Therefore, if International English is taught at our student's school, and there are no limits as to who is accepted, then the perceived probability of being allowed to study International English is high, should our student wish to pursue that goal.

As in the expectancy-value theory formulated by Eccles et al. (1983), the external environment surrounding a person – such as family, socialisers, and overall cultural milieu – will also play a part in deciding which goals are pursued. Therefore, the fourth and final motivational factor underlying the goal-setting process is the *external environment*. A straightforward example of how the external environment might affect subject choice could be that a student whose parents value, for example Economics or Science subjects, might not be as likely to choose International English as a student whose parents focus on the importance of language proficiency.

If a goal passes through the goal setting phase – in our example this means that our student formulates an “I want to”-sentence regarding the study of International English – according to Dörnyei and Ottó there are still no less than eight new motivational impulses which may play a part in determining if the goal is turned into an intention. Again, expectancy of success is important, but this time related to personal qualities and the perceived difficulty of the task in question. In addition, the individual conducts *cost-benefit calculations*, considering whether the benefits of choosing International English are larger than the costs it brings. Examples of costs can be that by choosing English you forgo the chance to choose another interesting subject, or that your grade point average might become higher if you chose, for example, biology – a subject which awards extra credit.

Other elements affecting the intention formation phase include a person’s *need for achievement* or *fear of failure*. A student who is guided by fear of failure might choose English because she believes that it is her strongest subject, while a person who is guided by a need for achievement might choose the same subject because she feels that she has not had sufficient success with English in the past and wish to keep struggling in the hopes of one day excelling. A person’s *degree of self-determination* (borrowed from Deci and Ryan) may affect the intention formation phase, as may various *goal properties*. These goal properties cover areas such as goal specificity (how clear is the outcome of participation in a certain activity?), goal proximity (will participation be beneficial sooner rather than later?), goal harmony/conflict (is the goal in question compatible with my other goals?) and level of aspiration (do I need to participate in this activity, or will I be content not to?). If a student is not able to see what new knowledge International English might provide her with, or if she believes that this is knowledge she will not need for years to come, it is quite uncertain if she will become a student of International English. If, on the other hand, her most important goal in life is to study Economics in London, and she believes that she has not yet reached a satisfactory level of English proficiency, it is quite possible, according to Dörnyei and Ottó, that she will choose International English.

Yet another important factor, which is highly relevant in school settings, is the *availability of task opportunities and options*. As seen, according to Eccles et al. (1983), value is one of the more accurate determiners of both intentional and actual course election, and students will often choose the subject they value the most. If our student attends a school which offers numerous programme subjects then the competition may be fierce as to which subjects are the most valued. If she attends a school with a limited number of subjects on

offer, this competition may not be as strong. *Urgency* also affects intention formation. At first glance urgency might seem less than relevant in the context of our student considering whether or not to choose International English. However, it could be that a perceived *lack* of urgency should be considered an influence which might lead students to not choose English programme subjects, which is also interesting.

If, after the above-mentioned motivational influences have been processed, our student is still intent on furthering her English proficiency, then the goal of doing so will turn into an intention. However, we can still not be sure that she will act upon this intention while still in school. Perhaps she perceives a summer course at an English-speaking university as both tempting and sufficient, or perhaps she believes she will be able to reach a satisfactory level on her own. In order for her intentions to be realised through the choice of International English, a final instigator is needed to spark the enactment process. According to Dörnyei and Ottó, four such instigators exist, two of which are not particularly relevant in the context of subject choice. They will therefore not be discussed further here. Of the two relevant instigators, the first covers *distracting influences and obstacles* which stand in the way of action implementation, particularly if powerful competing actions are available. As I understand Dörnyei and Ottó these obstacles resemble what was called external influences in the goal-setting phase, the only difference being that in the goal setting phase these influences can be so strong that they prevent an individual from even considering a particular goal. In the initiation phase, however, the intention to pursue a particular course of action is present, but due to external influences and perceived obstacles, the intention might still not be implemented.

The second relevant influence affecting action initiation is called *perceived consequences for not acting*. In some situations there might not be any such consequences, while in others there are several. For example, students are often aware that there are quite a few higher education programs they can not apply to without in-depth courses in Mathematics, while not choosing English might not be perceived to have any such consequences. When studying the reasons students have for choosing, or not choosing, English, it may become apparent that the perceived consequences for not acting (that is to say not choosing English) are small, and that this is part of the reason why other subjects were not chosen instead.

If a goal is converted into an intention, which consequently evolves into intention enactment, then the individual will, according to Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), cross the

“Rubicon” of action, and the activity in question should be initiated. Their model is useful in that it demonstrates how aspects from several different theories can be synthesised in a fashion which has greater explanatory power. In a way, as motivation is such a complex notion, created to explain something even more complex – human behaviour – it is only natural that we need more than a single theory for a satisfactory explanation. Therefore, when accounting for my findings below, the discussion will not be limited to one theory only.

### 3.7 Summing up

This chapter has provided an overview of important motivation theories, with specific focus on elements which can be related to subject choice. Motivation is a wide area, which can appear fairly muddled at the best of times. A project such as mine cannot be expected to draw upon only one of these theories, seeing that, as Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) call attention to, it is difficult to address all relevant aspects of motivation through the use of one theory only. Therefore, in this study, I have used several theories and angles in an attempt to construct a sound discussion of motivation for subject choice. The motivation theory reviewed in the present chapter has primarily informed two important parts of my work: the questionnaire which I used for collecting data, and the discussion of this data which is to be found in *Ch.7 Discussion*. The theories which I have drawn primarily upon are Expectancy-Value theory and The Process Model of L2 Motivation.



## 4. Method

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of the process of working with the present study. I begin by addressing how the study was planned and constructed, followed by how I selected and recruited sample schools to partake in the study. The focus of the chapter is on various problems which were encountered throughout working with this thesis, and how I have attempted to solve them.

### 4.2 Defining the research question

In the months before I started working on my master thesis I had only a vague idea of the topic I wished to study. I was inspired by a thread in an online discussion forum ([delogbruk.ning.com/group/engelsk/forum/](http://delogbruk.ning.com/group/engelsk/forum/)) where some teachers expressed concern that students at their schools had begun questioning why they should choose English in-depth studies after the introduction of the LK06 curriculum. I knew from official statistics (<http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/default.aspx>) that the English programme subjects were not struggling with student numbers nation-wide, but even so I was alarmed by what I read. Therefore, I immediately wanted to learn more about the state of the English programme subjects in Norwegian schools. I considered several different ways of doing this, and eventually formulated the research question which was presented in Ch.1 *Introduction*, section 1.7. I decided to address the research question using a questionnaire, which is to say I planned to use a quantitative approach. I will return to issues pertaining to choice of method further below (section 4.4 and 4.4.1), but first it is necessary to review some issues concerning the reference population.

### 4.3 Defining the reference population

One of the first steps of the research process was to identify a population for the study. According to Gorard (2003) it is important that the population of a research project is defined early on, because it can sometimes be of consequence for the type of study one decides to conduct.

Because the main goal of the present thesis is to investigate choice of programme subjects in upper secondary school, the target group would naturally consist of students

attending just that level of school. However, I had to choose between surveying Vg1, Vg2 or Vg3 students – or perhaps a combination of the three. It would naturally be an advantage if the target group had the subject choice process fairly fresh in mind, as that would reduce the chance of misrecollections and poor quality data. To achieve this, the survey would have to target Vg1 and/or Vg2 students immediately after they had elected programme subjects for the following year. However, most schools schedule the subject election process for spring, while I had to collect my data in autumn in order to finish my thesis within the allotted time limit. I found it pointless to study Vg1 students in October or November as their first subject election would be months away, and if I chose Vg2 students I would not be able to benefit from proximity in time to the subject choice. After some deliberation, I concluded that the best alternative was actually to let Vg3 students form the population.

Having to survey students during the autumn semester was not unproblematic. As mentioned, students generally choose subjects in March or April, while the survey had to be conducted in October and November. This essentially meant that I would be asking students to recount things that had happened approximately 0.5 and 1.5 years earlier. As there are limits to human memory, this delay could mean that respondents would not actually be recalling what it was that guided their choice of subjects at the time of election. Instead, it was possible that they would report the sentiments they had towards English at the time of the study. If so, the survey would not be measuring reasons why English was/was not chosen initially, but rather the view of English which students develop during upper secondary school. However, according to Olsen (2001), the relationship between time and recollection is not necessarily a negative one. What is often more important than the time that has passed is whether or not the incidents to be recalled were in anyway special or important to the respondent. Personally I remember subject election in upper secondary school as very significant, and I believe I can recall the reasons why I made my particular choices quite clearly. Naturally, there are huge individual differences among students with regards to the importance they assign subject election, but as it is one of the few fully self-determined choices an upper secondary student is allowed to make in school, it is not unlikely that it has a certain significance to a great deal of them.

### 4.3.1 Sample details

As stated in Ch. 2 *Statistics*, my sample comprises of students from state run schools only. The reason for this is first and foremost that the majority of upper secondary students in Norway attend state run schools. In addition, one particular problem with private schools, which furthered the decision of excluding them from the population, is that some of the more common private schools in Norway, such as the Rudolf Steiner Schools, do not offer programme subjects in the same way as state run schools. I concluded that the best way to ensure that all schools in the population were equal with regards to choice of programme subjects, would be to leave private schools alone and address state run school only.

Ultimately the population of the study was defined as “*all students in Norway who fulfil the following three requirements*”:

- attends Vg3 at a state run Norwegian upper secondary school
- attends the Educational programme for General Studies, specialising in General Studies
- attends a school which offers one or more of the English programme subjects

## 4.4 Procedure

It was clear from the way the research question is formulated that the study had to be conducted using a method which would allow contact with students, and which would allow these students to voice their personal opinions. It seemed to me that I had the choice of using interviews, which is a qualitative method, or conducting a survey study, which is a quantitative method. The two approaches have different strength and weaknesses, and settling on using a quantitative method was not a straightforward choice.

### 4.4.1 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research

When I decided on conducting a survey study, it was mainly due to what is often considered the major advantage of this type of research: that it is possible to collect substantial amounts of data using a minimum of time and effort. In addition, I decided to randomly select my respondents, which meant that – if done properly - it would be possible to generalise results from the sample to the population. I considered that being able to generalise results would be an advantage, and it would not be possible if I chose a quantitative method.

However, qualitative survey studies have several weaknesses, and there are two problems in particular which research method literature repeatedly warn against:

- 1) Using questionnaires can produce data of very poor quality if not conducted properly (Dörnyei 2007). Respondents are left to their own device when answering, and even if they are not consciously trying to deceive the researcher, respondents may not be able to recall accurately things that have happened in the past, or they may not take sufficient time to reflect upon their answers before providing them. The result will be that incorrect data is included in the material.
- 2) In order to minimise the chance of misunderstandings and misinterpretations, survey questions need to be simple and straightforward, which in essence means that they will lack “depth”. They are therefore best suited to collect relatively simple information (Gorard 2003).

Compared to questionnaires, interviews are better suited for capturing details and nuances, as they allow the researcher to ask for elaborations or explanations if something is unclear. It is also possible to change, add or omit questions during an interview, while questionnaires are uniform and may not easily be adjusted to suit the individual. Therefore, Gorard (2003) claims that the ideal study uses a mixed-method, where the survey is one part of a larger whole. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, it was not possible to follow his advice and supplement the questionnaires with for example interviews or observation. Since an important element of thesis work is to be able to plan and structure within a set timeframe, I decided to settle on using questionnaires only.

The section below accounts for how the questionnaire used for collecting data for the present thesis was constructed. Included is a discussion of some measures taken in order to ensure the quality of the study.

## 4.5 Constructing a survey

As mentioned in Ch.1 *Introduction*, I conducted a small-scale pilot study as part of a course paper prior to commencing work on my master thesis proper. In this pilot study students at two upper secondary schools in Oslo were asked to answer a questionnaire which was somewhat similar, but by no means identical, to the questionnaire used in the present study.

The pilot questionnaire was principally based on hunches about why English programme subjects are chosen/not chosen, and only marginally informed by theory and other studies. Such an approach to questionnaire design is not advisable, and the development of this master thesis survey had to be more solidly founded on theory.

I decided motivation theory, particularly related to second language learning, would provide a sound and well-researched frame for my study. As has already been addressed in the previous chapter, it seemed beneficial to construct a questionnaire which would examine aspects from several different motivation theories, instead of settling for one theoretical perspective only. Few studies have been conducted of subject choice in Norwegian schools since the introduction of the LK06 curriculum, and I could therefore not rely on previous studies as sources of information as to which theories would be relevant and appropriate for the present study of subject choice. The solution was to construct a questionnaire which would cover a wide selection of possible explanations of subject choice. This questionnaire should facilitate an examination of relevant aspects pertaining to *orientations*, as formulated by Gardner and Lambert (1972), Clément and Kruidenier (1983), Dörnyei (1990), and Noels (2001), *Expectancy-Value theory* as formulated by Eccles et al. (1983), and Eccles and Wigfield (2002), and *Self-determination theory* as discussed by Deci and Ryan (1983). For the most part, the items which were included in the questionnaire were based on existing literature within the field of motivational research. In addition, some items were informed by previous studies of subject choice (see Ch.1 *Introduction* for details), while others were created specifically for the present Norwegian setting. By combining the instinctive hunches examined in the pilot project with the experience of several different and well-researched motivation studies, I believed I have contributed to increasing the construct validity of the present study.

Because I wanted to examine ideas from several different theories I knew my survey had to be quite extensive. However, Dörnyei (2007) warns that surveys should rarely take more than 30 minutes to complete, as respondents might lose interest or become irritated if they have to spend more time than this answering. In addition, teachers are constantly being asked to spend time on activities which have little or nothing to do with their students' learning, and therefore it is quite possible that it would have been difficult to recruit participants if the study would take a long time to complete. Therefore, I concluded that asking to "steal" no more than 15 minutes of the students' time would be an advantage when attempting to recruit participating schools.

However, using a survey which is short can also be negative because it makes it difficult to use multi-item scales. Multi-item scales refer to clusters of several differently worded questions which focus on the same variable. In ordinary multi-item scales the answer to all the multi-item questions will be summed up, resulting in a total score. The idea is that discrepancy in response given to questions which are intended to address the same variable – due to misunderstandings or misinterpretations – will be evened out through a summation of scores. This depends on there being more than just a couple of questions aimed at each target, and Dörnyei (2007) recommends an absolute minimum of four.

The flipside of multi-item scales is that some respondents may react negatively to being asked several questions about the same topic. Some may feel that it is a test of their honesty, or that the survey is more tiresome and tedious than it needs to be (Dörnyei 2007). Furthermore, multi-item scaling needs multiple questions for each topic examined, which frequently leads to quite comprehensive questionnaire forms. However, as mentioned above, I wanted the questionnaire to be fairly comprehensive, but still take no more than 15 minutes to complete. In order to achieve this without exceeding the allotted time limit, I decided against constructing a survey in line with true multi-item scaling. Instead, I use some of its ideas in order to examine the harmony between various questions.

In my survey, there are generally two or three questions aimed at each of the elements examined, sometimes four, but never more. Instead of summing up the answers to these questions, I examined answers using simple correlation. There was for the most part a correlation of between  $r=.2$  and  $r=.6$ , significant at a .01 level, between similar items, which indicates that students who agree to one question examining for example *interest* will most often agree to another question examining the same thing. Even though this is not a proper and fool-proof way of examining the validity of items, it provided some indication of whether or not the survey questions had been interpreted in the way they were intended. For an example, please consult Appendix 4.1, where I have given an overview of the correlations within three main categories of items related to why English is chosen.

The version of the survey which was used to collect data for this thesis ended up having 33 questions which all students, regardless of subject choice, were to answer. In addition, there were 20 questions particular to students who had studied one or more English subjects, and 21 for the students who had not. I piloted this survey at one upper secondary school in Oslo, and asked the teacher who helped me to notice how long students spent answering my questions. According to her, all respondents used less than 15 minutes. After

this concluding pilot I made some minor changes to the wording of three questions, and decided that the result was suitable for use.

## 4.6 Selecting the sample

At the outset I hoped to work with a random sample, which is the only point of departure if one wants to draw conclusions which one can be fairly confident applies to the population as a whole. In order to accomplish a random sample one should ideally start with a list of all cases in the population and make sure that they all have an equal chance to be selected. Such a list is called a sampling frame (Gorard 2003).

In order to prepare a sample, it was necessary to compose a list of state run schools offering specialisation in general studies and the English programme subjects. Unfortunately, at the time of selecting the sample, I had not yet obtained the detailed information referred to in Ch.2 (personal communication with Hilde Hjorth-Johansen, Directorate for Education and Training, 17.11.2010) regarding which schools had students registered as studying English programme subjects in 2009-2010. Instead, I was in possession of a list of 222 schools composed for a research project at the Norwegian Centre for Foreign Languages in Education, where I had worked as an assistant. According to Gorard (2003) the lists from which one's sample is drawn is called a "sampling frame" and not for example "a population list", because in real life such lists are rarely complete. The researcher may know or suspect that this list has gaps, but she may not know how to rectify these gaps (Gorard 2003:58). This is a common problem for all research, which we can only do our best to minimise through conscious reflection regarding who is, and who is not, part of the population from which the sample is drawn. At the time of picking a sample, the list of 222 schools was the most comprehensive list I could manage, and consequently it became the sampling frame.

It is difficult to find an absolute answer to what is an acceptable sample size for the study one is planning. Small samples can lead to loss of potentially valuable results and may weaken the possibility of applying results to the population (Stevens 1992, as cited in Gorard 2003). However, there is generally no right or wrong answer when determining how large a sample should be. After some deliberation on my part and consultation with my supervisor, I decided to aim for a sample of 10 schools, perhaps consisting of between 400-500 students. 10 schools equal approximately 4 % of all relevant schools in Norway, while a selection of

400-500 students equals approximately 2 % of all students. The plan was to survey two or three classes at each school, provided that the schools had more than one parallel class.

In order to select schools, I organised my sampling frame alphabetically, and chose every 22nd school counting from the back. When conducting random sampling, the only true way of selecting samples is to let a computer draw numbers at random, or use other means which ensures absolute randomness, like pulling numbers out of a hat. However, according to Gorard (2003) this method is frequently not practiced. An alternative, which is the one I used, can be called systematic sampling (Gorard 2003), and involves choosing a random starting place on the list of potential cases, and then choosing sample cases at equidistant points on the sampling frame – i.e. every 22nd school. As long as the list is in no particular order, Gorard (2003) claims that the process is equivalent to random sampling using computer. My list of schools was originally organised by county, an organisation which could not be claimed as “in no particular order”. I decided the easiest way to make sure that the schools on my list appeared in a random fashion would be to organise the list alphabetically. There is nothing to indicate that the first letter in a school’s name is of consequence for what type of school it is, and this approach should therefore not produce any unforeseen bias.

#### **4.6.1 Recruiting sample schools**

Using the method described above, I selected 10 schools from the sampling frame, which were contacted, initially by e-mail, and subsequently by telephone. This part of the process took quite some time, as establishing contact with the proper people proved a challenge. Eventually, I managed to recruit seven schools out of the original 10, or 70 % of the intended sample. According to Johannessen, Tufte and Kristoffersen (2005), a 50 % response rate may be considered good, and consequently, 70 % is a fairly decent result. However, it appeared that a sample of seven schools would be somewhat too small, and I therefore wanted to supplement the initial selection with replacement schools. According to Gorard (2003) this is a common approach when dealing with missing cases. Preferably the cases which are substituted should be similar to those who did not respond, although this is in reality difficult to achieve. Therefore, any survey using supplement respondents needs to take care when presenting results to discuss whether or not there are any noticeable differences between the original selection and the supplement (Gorard 2003).



Recruiting supplementary participants was easier said than done. Time was running out, and I made the decision to abandon random selection for the remaining schools, and instead attempted to recruit through contacts. This would be a quicker way of recruiting the final schools, and would therefore not jeopardise the planned time schedule. In the original random selection, one of the schools that did not wish to participate was located in region Vestlandet, while the other two were located in region Østlandet. Through a personal acquaintance, and through a former colleague of my supervisor, I managed to recruit two schools from region Østlandet, and decided that a sample of nine schools would be sufficient for the study.

What this means, is that in addition to seven randomly selected schools, the final sample also includes two schools which were *not* randomly selected. In order to check if it is still possible to treat the study sample as random – and draw from the benefits of randomly selected samples – it was therefore necessary to examine the answers provided by students at the latter two schools, and compare them to those of the randomly selected schools. Please consult section 4.9.2 below for further details.

#### 4.6.2 Comparing the sample to the population

Table 4.1 below, shows a) the distribution, by region, of Vg2 students who attended the Educational programme for General Studies, specialising in General Studies in Norway in the school year 2009-2010, and b) the distribution of respondents, by region, in my survey. The reason why the sample of Vg3 students is compared to Vg2 students from 2009-2010, is that in time of writing the newest official statistics regards the school year 2009-2010. I assume that most Vg3 students in 2010-2011 attended Vg2 in 2009-2010, but it should be emphasised that this is an estimate only.

**Table 4.1 A table presenting the distribution of students per region in a) Norway and b) the sample.**

Regions in Norway	Percent of pupils in all in Vg2 in 2009-2010	Percent of pupils in survey – Vg3 2010-2011
<i>Nord-Norge</i> (Finmark, Nordland, Troms)	10 %	3 % (16)
<i>Trøndelag</i> (Nord-Trøndelag, Sør-Trøndelag)	8 %	8 % (40)
<i>Vestlandet</i> (Hordaland, Møre- og Romsdal, Rogaland, Sogn - og Fjordane)	25 %	28 % (135)
<i>Sørlandet</i> (Aust-Agder, Vest-Agder)	6 %	0 % (0)
<i>Østlandet</i> (Akershus, Buskerud, Hedmark, Oppland, Oslo, Telemark, Vestfold og Østfold)	51 %	61 % (293)

As can be seen above, in my sample, which was both randomly selected and a selection of convenience, region Østlandet seems somewhat overrepresented on the expense of region Nord-Norge and region Sørlandet. Region Vestlandet is also slightly overrepresented, while there is an almost perfect match between the sample and the population in region Trøndelag.

## 4.7 Collecting and processing data

Ideally, when using survey studies, the researcher (or an assistant) should be present as the questionnaires are answered in order to ensure that all respondents are subjected to the same conditions. However, as the schools in my sample were situated all over Norway it would have been too expensive and too time-consuming for me to do so. Instead, the surveys were sent in the mail to the teachers involved, together with details explaining how they should execute the survey. In addition, each form was equipped with a brief, but hopefully clear set of instructions. The schools were instructed to let students spend approximately 15 minutes on the questionnaire, which had to be distributed in one of the common core subjects. In this way, I could be certain that both students who had chosen English and students who had not were targeted. The completed forms were subsequently returned to me in the mail.

In order to process the data<sup>6</sup>, I used the statistical computer programme SPSS 17, in which I typed in the answers to all the questions in the questionnaire. I double checked that I had entered in correct information, as mistakes definitely do happen. In addition, I conducted simple frequency analyses in order to check for anomalies which would be symptomatic of typing errors. Hopefully, these measures have ensured that data has been transferred from paper and into digital form without errors.

## 4.8 Interpreting data

As mentioned above, I have used SPSS 17 in order to analyse my data. Because the main dependent variable of this study – the election of English programme subjects – is a nominal variable, I could in fact present a lot of interesting information simply by examining tables and frequency distributions within the two groups of respondents. From the outset the survey

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<sup>6</sup> Please note that the project had been reported to the NSD (Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste) in advance for registration and approval. NSD found that the study did not involve handling of sensitive information and that it was therefore not notifiable.

was designed for fairly simple statistical analysis, leaving more sophisticated analysis for future studies.

For the main part, I have therefore used SPSS to create tables of percentages, with means and standard deviations. In addition, I have used some bivariate correlations. The *select cases function* has been very useful in order to compare various subgroups in the sample to each other. The main part of the analysis was conducted in two separate operations, one studying reasons why English subjects were chosen, and one studying reasons why they were not. In addition, I also examined if factors such as previous grades and school attendance outside of Norway had any effect on whether or not students chose English.

## 4.9 External validity

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for choosing to conduct a quantitative study is that the interpretations from the data collected may be generalised from the sample to the population. However, for any quantitative study it is necessary to examine whether or not the study has been conducted according to certain principles which are required for generalisation to be possible. In more technical terms: it is necessary to examine the survey's *external validity*. External validity questions a study's generalisability, and examines to what extent, and within which population(s) and setting(s), the results of a study may be generalised (Trochim 2005).

Any discussion of external validity must investigate whether the study sample is in fact representative for the population. The foundations for a representative sample are laid through random selection, but even when the sample is in fact randomly selected, a large percentage of non-respondents may threaten its generalisability. As a consequence, there are two main issues which must be discussed for before it is sound to conclude that any results of the present study have external validity:

- 1) The significance of non-respondents
- 2) The inclusion of two non-randomly selected schools as substitutes for non-respondents

I will begin by addressing the first of these two issues before moving on to the second.

### **4.9.1 Non-respondents**

There were three schools from the original random sample that did not wish to participate in the study. Of these, one was located in Hordaland, one in Oslo and one in Akershus. The problem with non-respondents is that it is always possible that they share certain traits which make them prone not to respond. For example, it has often been the case in Social Science research that respondents of lower economic status are less likely to respond to questionnaires sent in the mail than people of higher status (Johannessen, Tufte & Kristoffersen 2005). The result is of course that researchers gain a limited perspective of the phenomena they aim to study. As a thought experiment, we can imagine that the non-responding schools chose not to participate because the teachers at these schools have little regard for the importance of the English programme subjects. It is possible that such attitudes would have affected the students at these schools, and that they would have reported answers which diverged from the rest of the respondents had they participated. It is also possible that if 1/3 of the original sample feels this way, then 1/3 of the population do too. If so, the fact that three schools did not wish to participate in the study may have resulted in erroneous data. This thought experiment illustrates how the nonparticipation of three schools may have had an effect on the external validity of the study results.

Fortunately, however, it does not appear that some schools declined to participate in my study due to a disregard for the English programme subjects. Instead, they explained their non-participation with reference to a general policy of not voluntarily taking part in any studies which would steal time away from teaching. Regarding the existence of three non-participating schools of the original random selection, I therefore conclude that there is nothing which indicates that these schools are in any way special or interesting. Consequently, it does not seem likely that the study has missed out on vital information because of their failure to participate.

### **4.9.2 Non-randomly selected sample**

As mentioned above, when three of the randomly selected schools declined to participate in this study, I decided it would be necessary to replace them in order to keep the number of respondents at an acceptable level. As time was of the essence, I approached some personal contacts within the Norwegian school system, instead of choosing random schools from the sampling frame. I recruited two substitute schools in this fashion. Because these schools

were not randomly selected, it was necessary to examine their impact on the results before it was possible to conclude anything regarding the external validity of the study. To do so, I needed to compare the responses given by respondents belonging to the seven randomly selected schools to the results provided by all respondents combined. By doing so, it would become apparent if the inclusion of two non-randomly selected schools had affected the results in any noticeable ways.

Fortunately, the results of this examination revealed that the differences between the randomly-selected schools and the non-randomly selected schools were minimal. Even more importantly, their impact on *results* was minimal. There are no indications that the two non-randomly selected schools differ much, or at all, from the rest of the schools in the sample, at least not in any way which exceeds the differences between the schools in the randomly selected sample segment. As a result, I have decided to treat all schools the same, and examined them as a unified sample.

### **4.9.3 Conclusion – external validity**

I believe there is little reason to expect that the inclusion of two non-randomly selected schools in the sample of this study threatens the external validity of any results. The main reason for this is that, as seen, the answers provided by the non-randomly selected schools do not appear to affect the outcome of the study results in any major way. In addition, there is little reason to suspect that the three non-participating schools were in any way different from those who agreed to participate, and that their failure to contribute “hide” relevant information. Also, with the exception of the one non-participating school in Hordaland County, the geographical distribution is the same for both the original sample and the final sample. All in all, there are few reasons why the present sample should not be treated as if it was an entirely random sample.

## **4.10 Summing up**

In this chapter I have presented the process of writing my master thesis with particular focus on challenges which appeared along the way. More specifically, Ch.4 *Method*, started with a presentation of how I came to choose the research question which is presently being studied. Next, it addressed how I defined the study population and put together a sampling frame. Furthermore, there was focus on the strengths and weaknesses of choosing to conduct a

quantitative study. I also described how the survey itself was constructed, and reflected on its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, much emphasis was placed on the sample selection process, and the fact that even though I will treat the sample as randomly selected, two of the schools included were in fact recruited through contacts rather than at random. Luckily, there is little which indicates that the two non-randomly selected schools are in any way different from the random sample. This is why I have decided to treat my sample as I would have had it been 100 % randomly selected.

In the next two chapters, I present the results of my study. Ch.5 *Results A* deals with students who have chosen to study English, while Ch.6 *Results B* deals with students who have not.

## **5. Results A – Why students chose English**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is the first of two result chapters where data from the questionnaire study is presented and analysed. The sections below address reasons for choosing to study English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school, as reported by relevant students from the sample. The following chapter concentrates on the students who have chosen not to study any English programme subjects, and their reported explanations for this choice. As was announced in Ch.4, section 4.8 the analysis which is performed in this and the following chapter, will, for the most part, be based on distribution of percentages and comparisons of groups for the various questionnaire items. It has proved a simple, yet effective way, of presenting important information regarding the subject election process of Norwegian upper secondary school.

The present chapter opens with a presentation of the sample in closer detail. Next, it focuses on the five most common explanations for choosing to study English programme subjects. I will analyse these explanations in an attempt to learn more about the way students view the English programme subjects. After that, there is a section which focuses on explanations which students consider be of little importance for their choice. It has been included because I believe that by rooting out irrelevancies it is possible to get a clearer view of which factors are important for subject choice.

Following the review of explanations of little importance, the reader will find a section which assesses the impact of some background factors on the likelihood of choosing English programme subjects. Next, there is a comparison of the answers provided by various student subgroups in an attempt to determine if they differ in their views of the subjects in question. To round off, the chapter is summed up and concluded.

### **5.2 Regarding the sample**

As mentioned, 484 respondents, from nine different schools, took part in the present survey. Of these, 183, or approximately 38 %, belonged to the Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics Studies, while 287 students, or 59 %, belonged to the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies. In addition, there were seven individuals who failed to indicate affiliation, but of these, six can be identified through their programme subjects as belonging to the latter area. One student remains undetermined.

In addition to these 477 individuals, there were seven respondents who claimed to belong to a programme area outside of the Education Programme for Specialisation in General Studies. Since this study was designed to examine students who specialise in General Studies *only*, it was specified repeatedly to the participating schools that only students of this specialisation were to fill out the questionnaire. Still, seven individuals of other study affiliations were erroneously included in the sample. It is of course possible that these individuals ticked the wrong box, either on purpose or by mistake, and that they are in fact students specialising in General Studies. However, as there is no way of knowing for sure, I decided to omit these respondents from the sample. Table 5.1 below, displays the distribution of students by programme area and gender, after the students claiming other specialisations have been omitted:

**Table 5.1 A table showing the distribution of respondents for each of programme area within General Studies. N=477**

Programme area	Gender frequency			
	Total	Male	Female	unknown
Natural Science and Mathematics Studies	183	88	94	1
Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies	293	121	168	4
Missing information	1	1	-	-
Total	477	210	262	5

The valid sample comprises 210 male respondents and 262 female respondents. In addition, there are five respondents who have failed to indicate their gender. Consequently, the sample consists of 44 % men, 55 % women, and 1 % where gender is unknown. Table 5.2 below illustrates how many of these students have studied one or more of the English programme subjects.

**Table 5.2 A table showing the number and percentages of respondents who have studied one or more English programme subjects. N=477**

Studied one/more English programme subject?	Frequency	Percent
No	264	55
Yes	213	45
Total	477	100.0

Nearly 45 % of the respondents claim to have studied one or more of the English programme subjects. As presented in Chapter 2, in Norway as a whole approximately 33 % of all Vg2 students specialising in General Studies chose to study International English in their second year of upper secondary school. In addition, somewhere between 350 and 550 students generally choose International English in their final year, which adds between 1.5-2.5 % to



the total percentage of students who study at least one English programme subject.<sup>7</sup> What this means is that in the present sample, the proportion of relevant students is approximately 9-11 % higher than for the student population.

Perhaps this overrepresentation came about by chance. However, another possibility is that the teachers who were in charge of the questionnaires at the participating schools thought they were doing the study a favour by choosing classes with high numbers of English students as respondents. They were asked to conduct the survey in a Vg3 common core subject – like Norwegian or History – but I gave no other directions as to how participating classes should be selected. Luckily, it is unlikely that an overrepresentation of English students will have any negative effects on the study's results. The only real outcome would seem to be that there are more respondents who can share their reasons for choosing English.

### 5.3 What have they studied?

Thus far, I have stated that in the present sample, 213 students have studied at least one of the three English programme subjects. In this section, I will take a closer look at the number of students who have chosen the various possible combinations of these subjects in the material collected.

The rules for programme subject election dictates that students are allowed to choose between studying International English in Vg2 and Vg3, while the two more advanced English subjects are only available to students who have finished International English. On the whole, this means that they must be studied in Vg3. Table 5.3 below, offers an overview of the English subject combinations which were present in the study sample.

**Table 5.3 A contingency table illustrating the frequency of possible subject combinations of English programme subjects present in the sample**

	No English in Vg3	Social Studies English (Vg3)	English Literature and Culture (Vg3)	Both Vg3 English subjects	Vg3 English – variant not stated	International English (vg3)
International English (Vg2)	34 % (73)	35 % (74)	15 % (31)	1 % (3)	11 % (24)	–
No English in Vg2	–	–	–	–	–	4 % (8)

<sup>7</sup> As International English is a prerequisite for admittance to the Vg3 English subjects (other regulations applies to exchange students), it is only necessary to calculate the percentage of students who have studied that subject if one wishes to estimate the percentage of all students who have chosen one or more of the English programme subjects.

The most frequent subject combination in the sample is a combination of International English and Social Studies English. As can be seen in table 5.3, 35 % of the relevant students chose this subject combination. This is the most frequent combination in the reference population as well. It should, however, be noted that it is likely that the percentage of students in the sample who have studied a combination of International English and Social Studies English is actually somewhat larger than 35 %. The reason for this is that 11 % of the relevant respondents report to have studied English both in Vg2 and Vg3, but fail to specify which of the two Vg3 English subjects they chose.

Approximately 38 % of the relevant respondents, or 81 students, chose to study International English only (either in Vg2 or Vg3). That is to say they did not elect any Vg3 English subjects. In the reference population this figure was a little more than 25% (see Chapter 2, table 2.6 for details). Evidently, there are some differences between the sample and the reference population, but on the whole, the main tendencies are the same: In both cases, Social Studies English is more popular than English Literature and Culture, and in both the sample and the population, the majority of English students continue from International English to either of the two Vg3 subjects.

## 5.4 The schools

Next, there was some variation among the nine schools that participated in the study with regards to the share of respondents who had chosen to study at least one English programme subject. Table 5.4 below presents the number of survey participants from each school, and the percentages that have and have not chosen English programme subjects.

**Table 5.4 A table showing the percentages (and number) of respondents who have studied English at each of the nine participating schools**

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8	School 9
English	55% (34)	45 % (20)	41 % (36)	56 % (32)	22 % (8)	73 % (11)	43 % (24)	42 % (20)	39 % (28)
No English	45 % (28)	55 % (24)	59 % (51)	44 % (25)	78 % (28)	27 % (4)	57 % (32)	58 % (28)	61 % (44)
No. of respondents in all	62	44	87	57	36	15	56	48	72

The two most diverging results are to be found at school 5, where exceptionally few students (22 %) have chosen English, and school 6, where an exceptionally large proportion (73 %) of the students have done so. The school with the largest percentage of students who have

chosen English is in fact the smallest school in the material, with only 22 Vg3-students attending the Educational Programme for General Studies. It is likely that smaller schools will not be able to offer as many different programme subjects as larger schools, and this could at least partially explain why such a large percentage of students have chosen English at this particular school. At the remaining seven schools between 39 % and 56 % of the respondents had studied English, while the mean percentage for these nine schools is 46 %.

## 5.5 Why students chose English

The remaining sections of this chapter will focus on one of the two central questions examined by the present study: *What reasons do students in Norwegian upper secondary school have for choosing to study at least one of the English programme subjects?* For the main part, the data presented below was collected by asking respondents to rate their levels of agreement for 19 items comprising possible explanations of subject choice (see item 4.1-4.19 in Appendix 1 below). The students were also encouraged to include additional information by hand if they felt that something important had been left out. Few, however, opted for this solution. For a more comprehensive overview of the response to the above-mentioned 19 items on subject choice please consult Appendix 5.1.

### 5.5.1 The five most common explanations

According to the answers provided by respondents who had studied one or more of the English programme subjects, there were five explanations in particular that were important when explaining their subject choice. These are displayed in table 5.5 below. Please note that whenever a table includes a column for *mean*, the mean is calculated from the understanding that *strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neither agree nor disagree* = 3, *agree* = 4, and *strongly agree* = 5. To give an example: In the first row of table 5.5, the mean is listed as 4.56. What this indicates is that the mean response for that particular statement is to be found in the intersection between *agree* (= 4) and *strongly agree* (= 5).

The explanation for a choice to study English which received the highest response among relevant students is: *I chose English because I believe it can be useful for future studies* (item 4.5, table 5.5). Slightly more than 70% of all relevant respondents strongly agreed to this statement, and in total almost 90 % either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with it.

Runner up for most favoured explanation of a choice to study at least one English programme subject is *I chose English because I wished to learn the language better* (item 4.3, table 5.5). This explanation has a mean which is only marginally lower than the mean for the most favoured explanation – 4.54 compared to 4.56. What this implies, is that the average student reports either to *agree* or *strongly agree* with both of the abovementioned statements.

**Table 5.5** A table showing the five explanations of subject choice which are most frequently agreed upon by students who have studied English. Please note that the percentages have been put in round figures, and that some rows therefore amount to slightly more or less than 100 %. N= 213

I chose English because...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
4.5 ...I believe it can be useful for future studies	1 %	1 %	9 %	18 %	70 %	4.56	0.79
4.3 ...I wished to learn the language better	1 %	3 %	7 %	21 %	69 %	4.54	0.82
4.8...I believe it will be useful for my future career	0 %	2 %	13 %	20 %	65 %	4.49	0.79
4.1...it is a subject I feel I master	2 %	3 %	11 %	36 %	47 %	4.23	0.94*
4.2...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade	2 %	5 %	20 %	38 %	34 %	3.98	0.98

\*N=212

The explanation which was rated third in terms of average response was *I chose English because I believe it will be useful for my future career* (item 4.8, table 5.5). This item has a mean of 4.49, and in total 2/3 of the relevant respondents *strongly agreed* to its claim.

### 5.5.2 Analysis

From the distribution of answers presented in table 5.5, it is evident that the three most popular explanations of a choice to study English receive fairly similar levels of agreement from the respondents. For all of them, the mean response is to be found in the intersection between *I agree* and *I strongly agree*, expressed through agreement-rates of 85 % and up. What then, are some possible interpretations of it being these particular explanations that are most frequently agreed upon as important for a choice of English programme subjects?

It seems that any interpretation of what students mean by agreeing to the three above mentioned statements should focus on *usefulness*. It is likely that when students agree that the English programme subjects will be useful for future study and work, they are in fact agreeing that having a good command of the English *language* will be useful for future study and work. Because the respondents reportedly aim for a wide array of different educations and careers, it is difficult to imagine that it should be anything else than the possibility to increase one's English proficiency which appeals to almost all of them. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that a large majority of the respondents state that their subject choice was motivated by a wish to become more proficient in English (cf. item 4.3, table 5.5).

Taken together, the preferred explanations give the impression that for the most part students chose English not primarily because they are intrigued by the various topics which are dealt with in English class, but rather because they value the *tool* which is used when discussing these topics. In short, students display an instrumental motivation (see section 3.4.2) towards studying the subjects in question, as they recognise the English programme subjects as providing good opportunities for improving their language proficiency. In addition, their main focus seems to be on the utility value of being proficient in English, rather than interest and inner drive. It certainly seems as if intrinsic motivation – which is to say motivation originating from interest and sense of pleasure (Deci & Ryan 1985) – is of secondary importance. I believe this interpretation is strengthened by the fact that, as will be presented in section 5.5.4 below, only a minority of students report interest-related factors as particularly significant for the choice to elect English programme subjects.

### **5.5.3 Ability**

As stated above, the three most popular explanations for why students choose English programme subjects – 1) usefulness for future studies, 2) in order to learn the language better, and 3) usefulness for future career – receive fairly similar levels of support. In fact, approximately 2/3 of the respondents strongly agree to all of them. For the fourth and fifth most popular explanation there is no longer a majority who strongly agrees to their importance, but still 47 % of all respondents *strongly agree* that they chose English because it is *a subject they feel they master* (item 4.1, table 5.5), while 1 in 3 strongly agreed that an *expectancy of good grades* (item 4.2, table 5.5) was of consequence. When considering the combined support of students who *agree* and those who *strongly agree* to these two claims, their importance is further strengthened. Approximately 5 out of 6 *agree* or *strongly agree*

that they chose one or more English subjects because it is a subject they feel they master, while slightly fewer than 3 of 4 feel the same about the prospect of receiving a good grade.

The fourth and fifth most common explanations of a choice to study English, express that students value the feeling of ability when they elect programme subjects. In chapter 1, section 1.5.3, I stated that several studies of subject choice have found that students refer to ability when encouraged to explain their subject choices (Rodeiro 2007; Schreiner 2008; Wikley & Stables 1999), and other studies (Hægeland et al. 2007) have found a strong link between good grades and subject choice. It is therefore less than surprising to find that two explanations associated with ability were quite important for students when they made their choice to study English.

#### **5.5.4 Interest-related factors**

The data presented in section 5.5.2 above, indicates that a majority of English students perceive the English programme subjects as useful, and as having practical applicability. It seems it is the prospect of acquiring language skills which motivate students the most when deciding to study English. However, as there is more to the English programme subjects than mere language learning, it seems relevant to investigate and discuss the importance of various interest-related factors for subject choice.

There were five statements included in the questionnaire addressing interest-related factors that might have influenced students when choosing subjects. One of these in particular received a fair share of support for its importance; More than 40 % of the relevant respondents strongly agreed that they chose English because of an *interest in languages*. At first glance, this response-rate is actually quite surprising, considering the low number of Norwegian upper secondary school students who study languages apart from English. A likely interpretation is therefore that what respondents wish to convey is that they are interested in the *English* language. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that *an interest in languages* is the interest factor which receives the most support in the material. It is noteworthy because this explanation can be viewed as supporting of the above mentioned impression (see section 5.5.2) that students first and foremost view the English programme subjects as tools through which they may expand their English language proficiency.

As displayed in table 5.6 below, there was generally less support for the importance of the other four interest factors included in the study. As this table reveals that only 1 in 3 *agree* or *strongly agree* that they chose English because of an interest in English speaking art

and/or literature (item 4.14, table 5.6). Evidently, this explanation is not very important for the typical student. However, if the average student does not appear to be very interested in English-language arts and literature, there are more who claim that an interest in English-speaking cultures was important for their subject choice. As can be seen in the second row of table 5.6, 58 % *agree* or *strongly agree* with this statement (item 4.11, table 5.6). It consequently seems to have been of some significance for a slight majority of respondents.

**Table 5.6 A table presenting reasons for choosing English related to interest**

I chose English because...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
4.13...I am interested in languages (N=212)	7 %	7 %	17 %	28 %	41 %	3.88	1.22
4.11...I am interested in one or more English speaking cultures (N=213)	13 %	10 %	19 %	32 %	26 %	3.48	1.31
4.4...it sounded interesting when it when my teacher/ councillor presented it (N=211)	10 %	12 %	37 %	23 %	18 %	3.26	1.20
4.14...I am interested in English speaking art and/or literature (N= 213)	18 %	21 %	28 %	18 %	16 %	2.92	1.31
4.9...the syllabus(es) was/were exciting (N=212)	17 %	19 %	40 %	17 %	8 %	2.79	1.14

The final row of table 5.6 above shows that only 1 in 4 agree that they chose English because of *the syllabus* (item 4.9). Apparently, this explanation was of no consequence to the average student. It is likely that prior to electing their programme subjects, students are not fully aware of the content of the various syllabuses, either due to lack of information or lack of interest. However this may be, it seems the English subjects are not primarily chosen because they are deemed interesting in their own right. Instead, the three English programme subjects appear to be considered useful means towards reaching a particular end: Learning the English language at a more advanced level.

## 5.6 Reasons of little or no consequence

In this section I will examine which of the items included in the questionnaire appear to have *the least* explanatory power when it comes to why English programme subjects are chosen. Learning which of the hypothesised explanations students reject should contribute to a fuller, and more nuanced, understanding of the rationale behind student choice.

Of the explanations which are least favoured by respondents, there is one in particular which is opposed by almost everyone: *I chose English at random* (item 4.18). Details regarding the responses are provided in table 5.7.

**Table 5.7 A table presenting the response rate for the hypothesised explanation of a choice to study English which received the least amount of support in the present study. N =210**

I chose English	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
4.18...at random	73 %	13 %	6 %	5 %	3 %	1.52	1.01

Only 8 % *agree* or *strongly agree* that they chose English randomly, while 86 % either *disagree* or *strongly disagree* to the same statement. What this means is that the English programme subjects do not appear to be subjects which are frequently elected by students who lack motivation for studying them. Second, it means that few students report to have chosen English at random should mean that they are aware that there were certain reasons which compelled them to make their choice, and hopefully they were able to recall (at least some of) these reasons when answering the questionnaire.

In addition to opposing that their choice to study English programme subjects was made at random, there are four other explanations from the questionnaire which received low levels of agreement among the average respondent. First of all, these explanations, which are displayed in table 5.8 below, show that in general, respondents disagree to have chosen English because someone in their family wanted them to (item 4.7). Next, a majority oppose having chosen English simply because it fit their timetable (item 4.12), and most students also deny that they have chosen English because the school they attend focuses on the importance of studying languages (item 4.6). The fourth and final item included in table 5.8 indicates that few students claim to have chosen English programme subjects because other students had recommended them (item 4.16).



**Table 5.8** A table presenting possible reasons for choosing English which appeared to be of little or no consequence for subject choice

I chose English (because)...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
4.7...someone in my family wanted me to do so (N=213)	44 %	11 %	24 %	16 %	5 %	2.28	1.31
4.12...it fit my timetable (N=213)	45 %	12 %	21 %	13 %	10 %	2.31	1.40
4.6...my school focuses on the importance of learning languages (N=212)	21 %	20 %	47 %	9 %	3 %	2.53	1.01
4.16...other students recommended them (N=209)	18 %	17 %	42 %	19 %	4 %	2.74	1.08

A likely interpretation of these responses suggests that few students felt that they were in any way pressured into choosing English. As Deci and Ryan (1985) would say: the student motivation does not seem to be *externally regulated* (see Ch.3, section 3.4.6). The average respondent claims to have chosen subjects independently, and it appears she has either not felt, or ignored, pressure from external sources attempting to dictate her choice. All in all, it seems that students have chosen English programme subjects simply because they – for one reason or another – wanted to do so.

## 5.7 Other factors

In addition to questions directed at students who had chosen at least one of the English programme subjects, there were also questions included in the questionnaire that were addressed to all students regardless of subject choice. They were included to allow for comparison with the students who had not chosen English. The results are presented immediately below.

### 5.7.1 Grades

Among students who had been rewarded with either of the two best grades – 5 and 6 – for their efforts in the Vg1 common core subject *English*, approximately 55 % percent chose to study at least one English programme subject. Among students who managed the grade 4 our

lower, 37.5 % did the same. The correlation between grades in Vg1 English and electing one or more English programme subjects is, however, quite modest ( $r = .20$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ,  $N = 465$ ). What is interesting, though, is that when checking for differences between the students of the two programme areas, it becomes apparent that there is no correlation at all between grades and electing English programme subjects for students of the Natural Science and Mathematics studies. For students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies, on the other hand, there is a moderate positive correlation ( $r = .37$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ,  $N = 287$ ). It appears that previous grades are not useful as indicators of subject choice for the former group, while it is moderately so for the latter group.

### **5.7.2 Source of learning**

At the study outset, I hypothesised that students who feel they have learned large percentages of the English they know outside of school would be less likely to elect English programme subjects. The reason why I formed this hypothesis was that in the pilot study some students used the comment field to express that they believed that they had the ability to perfect their English knowledge on their own, and therefore did not see the need for furthering any formal English studies.

According to Elisabeth Ibsen (2002), and a study she conducted of Norwegian lower secondary school pupils, the average Norwegian student believes that she has learned half of the English she knows from school, and almost 35 percent from the media. As a future English teacher I acknowledge the positive effect media (and other sources) can have on language development, but I doubt that 35 % is an accurate estimate of how much is learned from such sources. However, I find it very interesting that students clearly perceive the influence of media as important for their language learning, and I wished to examine such beliefs in the present study. Therefore, respondents were asked to indicate, in percent, approximately how much of the English they know they had learned<sup>8</sup> from the following four sources:

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<sup>8</sup> I wanted to examine how students themselves perceive the impact of the abovementioned sources of learning on their language acquisition, and it was therefore never expected that these student estimates would be accurate.

- a) school
- b) family members
- c) media (inc. TV, movies, music, computers etc)
- d) other source

Respondents were informed that the answer they provided should amount to a total of 100 %. Unfortunately, there was a small minority which did not manage to follow this instruction, and in order to prevent wrong answers from distorting the results, answers amounting to either more or less than 100 % have been omitted from the calculations presented in table 5.9.

As mention, my hypothesis was that students who had not chosen English would report lower levels of regard for the importance of formal teaching for their English language learning. When examining the result, however, they proved different than anticipated.

**Table 5.9 A table presenting the reported mean source of English acquisition, in percent, for students who have a) studied one or more English programme subjects (N= 199) and b) not studied any English programme subjects (N=244)**

	<b>English programme subject(s)</b>	<b>No English programme subjects</b>
<b>Source</b>	Mean	Mean
<b>1.School</b>	40 %	43 %
<b>2. Media (inc. TV, movies, music, computer use and the internet</b>	39 %	40 %
<b>3. Family members</b>	10 %	9 %
<b>4. Other sources</b>	10 %	8 %

As can be seen in table 5.9, the difference between the two groups of students is not large. However, quite contrary to my hypothesis, the students who have studied one or more of the English programme subjects feel that they have learned, on average, a slightly smaller percentage of the English they know in school, compared to those who have not studied English. However, these students credit a bit more of their knowledge to “other sources”, perhaps reading or travelling, than do those who have not studied English.

Since the difference in percent between the two groups of students is very small, it could easily be a coincidence that in this particular sample one group appears to have slightly more respect for the value of formal teaching than the other group. However, it would seem that my initial assumption – that students who report having learnt a larger percent of their English knowledge outside of school should be less interested in formal English studies – was wrong. All in all, both groups hold fairly similar views when it comes to the sources of their English language acquisition.

### 5.7.3 School attendance outside of Norway

A final factor which seems to have a positive effect of the choice of studying English, is having attended school outside of Norway. There were 39 students in the material who claimed to have done so, 16 of which had been on an exchange programme in Vg2. Of the students who had attended school abroad, almost 72 %, or 28 individuals, chose to study English programme subjects. Only two of these did not opt for one of the two Vg3 subjects.

There were no questions included in the survey asking students who had attended school abroad which county they had lived in, but a large proportion of the students who had been on foreign exchanges included this information voluntarily. According to the information provided it seems most had of them had visited the US or UK. Perhaps these students choose English in Vg3 because they knew they would have an advantage from having gone to school in an English speaking country. Or, perhaps they wished to make sure that they would not neglect the language they had practiced daily while they were away.

In any case, it seems that having attended school outside of Norway is a factor which increases the likelihood of a particular individual choosing English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school.

## 5.8 Summing up so far

So far, this chapter has focused on the answers provided by all survey participants who had chosen to study at least on English programme subject. According to their responses, their most important reasons for choosing this particular subject are:

- 1) they believe these subjects have certain qualities which can be useful for both future *studies* and future *career*.
- 2) they wished *to learn the English language better*.
- 3) they felt the English programme subjects were *subjects they mastered* and which they *expected a good grade from*.

Respondents express reasons for having chosen to study the English programme subjects which appear utility-based, rather than rooted in interest. What this means is that it seems common for upper secondary school students to be extrinsically motivated for studying English (see section 3.4.6).

The sections above have also addressed that there is a moderate correlation between grades in Vg1 English and the choice to elect one or more English programme subjects in Vg2 and Vg3. However, this correlation only applies to students of the Languages, Social Sciences and Economics programme. This is an interesting finding, which will be addressed further in Ch.6 *Results B*, sections 6.1.2 and 6.4.1.2.

Hitherto, this chapter has focused on reviewing answers provided by all respondents who have chosen English, collectively. In the section which follows immediately below, however, various segments of the sample will be compared to each other in an attempt to discover whether or not there are any important differences between them which should be accounted for.

## 5.9 Comparing the views of student sub-groups – why choose English?

In this section, I compare various sub-groups of the sample, in order to examine whether or not respondents who belong to different groups have different reasons for electing at least one English programme subject. The rationale behind analysing smaller segments of the complete sample is that through these comparisons it is possible to shed light on differences which would otherwise have gone unnoticed. I start off by comparing the answers provided by students belonging to the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies to students of the Natural Science and Mathematics programme. Next follows an assessment which compares the views of students who have only studied International English with the views of students who have also studied one of the two Vg3 English subjects. Finally, I will briefly compare the answers provided by boys to those provided by girls.

### 5.9.1 Comparing the programme areas

The aim of this section is to examine whether and to what extent, there are differences in the factors that students of the two programme areas – Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies and Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics Studies – report as important for their choice to study at least one English programme subject. Seeing as only 1 in 5 of the students who have studied English belong to the Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics studies, it is possible that the students

from this programme area who do elect English have some very particular reasons for their choice. It is also possible that these reasons would be different from the reasons favoured by students belonging to the Programme Area for Languages, Social Science and Economics Studies. Their answers will therefore be compared below.

When comparing the answers provided by students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics studies to those who specialise in the Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies, the most obvious thing to note, is that the answers provided are in fact very similar. Both groups report that the five explanations presented in table 5.5 above were the most important for their choice, and the differences in agreement-rates are quite small. For reference, I have nevertheless included table 5.10 below, which illustrates some inconsistency between the two groups.

**Table 5.10 A table presenting the five explanations of a choice to study English which have the highest means among students of a) the Programme Area Natural Science and Mathematics studies (NSM) and b) the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies (LSE). N =45 (NSM), N = 168 (LSE)**

I chose English because...	Agree		Strongly agree		Mean		Standard deviation	
	NSM	LSE	NSM	LSE	NSM	LSE	NSM	LSE
...I believe it will be useful for my future career	17 %	21 %	69 %	64 %	4.56	4.47	0.73	0.80
...I believe it can be useful for future studies	24 %	17 %	64 %	72 %	4.53	4.57	0.69	0.82
...I wished to learn the language better	18 %	22 %	67 %	69 %	4.47	4.55	0.89	0.80
...it is a subject I feel I master	44 %	34 %	42 %	49 %	4.22	4.23	0.88	0.95
...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade	40 %	38 %	29 %	36 %	3.84	4.01	1.02	0.96

As the variation between students belonging to different programme areas is minimal, there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that when students from the Natural Science and Mathematics programme choose English, they do so for their own very special reasons. Rather, it seems that they choose English because they value the same aspects of the English programme subjects as students specialising in Languages, Social Science and Economics Studies.

### **5.9.2 One vs. two English programme subjects – different explanations for choice?**

In the following I present the results of a comparison of the answers provided by students who have studied full English in-depth studies, to those who have studied International

English only. At the study outset, I hypothesised that there could be interesting differences in the way these two groups explained their choice to study English. However, after closer inspection I could find little evidence to support this theory. In fact, both groups appear to explain their choice with reference to the same factors, and the variation in the data is small. As a consequence, I will not go into detail with regards to their responses. Still, it is worth mentioning briefly that students who elected International English as well as one of the two Vg3 English subjects, report somewhat higher levels of agreement that their choice was guided by an interest in languages: 78 % of the students who have chosen full English in-depth studies *agree* or *strongly agree* to this statement, while the corresponding percentage is 58 % for students who studied International English only. In addition, students who elected English both in Vg2 and Vg3 report somewhat higher levels of belief in own language learning abilities, compared to students who chose International English only. For a more detailed account of the differences between these two groups of students, please consult Appendix 5.2.

### **5.9.3 Gender – are there differences in the responses of boys compared to girls?**

In the sample, 125 girls and 86 boys report having studied at least one of the English programme subjects. This equals 48 % of the total number of girls and 41 % of the total number of boys. What this means is that the subject election gap between the genders is not huge, although a somewhat larger percentage of girls prefer to add one or more English subjects to their list of programme subjects. It is interesting to note, however, that for students attending the Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics studies, it is slightly more common for boys than for girls to choose English: 27 % of the boys, but only 22 % of the girls made such a choice.

When examining the answers reported by boys to those of girls, I found that on the whole, there are fairly small variations in the answers provided by the two groups. The most noticeable differences is that for girls, more than 75 % report that an interest in languages was important for their choice to study English programme subjects, while less than 60 % of the boys do the same. For a more detailed overview of explanations which were important for boys and girls when urged to explain their choice to study English, please consult Appendix 5.3.

### 5.9.4 Conclusions drawn from the subgroup comparisons

After having searched for dissimilarities and distinctions within various sub-groups present in the complete sample, the conclusion I will draw is that generally different groups report very similar explanations for their subject choice. For the most part, each subgroup agrees with the complete sample (see table 5.5 above) as to which statements best describe their decision to study English programme subjects. On occasion, however, we find that one or two alternative explanations are rated more highly within a certain segment. Nevertheless, it seems the explanations displayed in table 5.5 (for a reminder see list in section 5.10 directly below) are relevant for all respondents, regardless of programme affiliation, gender and whether they have studied two, or just one, of the English programme subjects. The bottom line is that there is little evidence in the material that any of the sub-groups examined stand out through having a different view of the reason why the English programme subjects have been chosen.

## 5.10 Summing up

This chapter has presented the results of the survey study pertaining to why some students choose to study English programme subjects. On the whole, the data collected indicates that there are high levels of agreement between relevant respondents. To be more precise, a majority of students refer to the following five statements when urged to explain their choice to study at least one English programme subject:

I chose one or more of the English programme subjects because...

- 1) ... I believe it can be useful for future studies
- 2) ... I wish to learn the language better
- 3) ... I believe it will be useful for my future career
- 4) ...it is a subject I feel I master
- 5) ...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade

It appears that the most common reasons for choosing to study English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school, relates to a desire of becoming a proficient user of the English language. Students seem to appreciate the fact that English is an important tool both for communicating and acquiring information, and they recognise that the English



programme subjects can be valuable resources for strengthening ones' working knowledge of the language.

In the following chapter, *Chapter 6 Results B*, I will examine the questionnaire answers provided by students who had not chosen any of the English programme subjects. Naturally, the focus is on the reported explanations for a choice to discontinue all English studies after Vg1. Again, various sub-groups of the relevant sample will be compared in order to determine if there are any important differences between them which must be accounted for.

## 6. Results B – Why students did not choose English

The focus of this chapter is on the questionnaire answers provided by students who did not select any English programme subjects, and their reported explanations for their choice. As in the preceding chapter, this chapter opens by presenting an overview of the students included in the relevant sample. I will continue with some general remarks about the answers which have been provided, and how they differ from those in the previous chapter. This is followed by a section reviewing explanations that were included in the questionnaire, but which appeared to be of minimal importance.

The main focus of this chapter is of course on explanations for choosing not to study English that have been of importance to larger segments of the sample. As in the preceding chapter, this chapter also includes comparisons between sub-groups in the sample.

### 6.1 Regarding the sample

From the previous chapter we know a bit about the type of students who have studied one or more of the English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school. What then, characterises students who have not included English as one of their electives? Beginning with the sections immediately below, this chapter presents data on students who decided to discontinue their English studies after finishing Vg1, and their reported reasons for making this choice.

#### 6.1.1 Students who have not chosen English

In the research sample of 477 students, 264 individuals, or 55 % of the complete sample, had not chosen any English programme subjects in upper secondary school. As can be seen in table 6.1 below, there are more boys than girls who do not study English.

**Table 6.1** A table presenting the number and percentages of students, by gender, who have and have not studied any English programme subjects. N=472

Gender	Studies English programme subject	
	No	Yes
Male	59 % (124)	41 % (86)
Female	52 % (137)	48 % (125)

In the sample, 43 % of students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies chose not to study any English programme subjects. For students specialising in Natural Sciences and Mathematics studies, the corresponding percentage is 75 %. Consequently, it is much more common for students of the latter specialisation to pass on the chance to elect English in-depth studies.

**Table 6.2 A table showing the percentage of students per programme area who have and have not studied any English programme subjects. N=476**

Studies English programme subject		
Programme Area	No	Yes
Natural Science and Mathematics Studies	75 % (138)	25 % (45)
Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies	43 % (125)	57 % (168)

For the Programme Area for Natural Science and Mathematics Studies, the percentage of girls who have chosen English is lower than for the boys, while the opposite is the case for students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies. The details, which can be seen in table 6.3 below, reveal that in the sample, 49 % of the boys specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics did not choose any English programme subjects, while the corresponding percentage for girls was 38 %. For students specialising in Natural Sciences and Mathematics, 73 % of boys, and as many as 78 % of girls did not elect any English subjects.

**Table 6.3 A table presenting the gender-distribution for students who have, and have not, chosen to study English programme subjects within both programme areas. N=471**

	Studies English programme subject			
	Natural Science and Mathematics Studies		Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Male</b>	73 % (64)	27 % (24)	49 % (59)	51 % (62)
<b>Female</b>	78 % (73)	22 % (21)	38 % (64)	62 % (104)

### 6.1.2 Grades

In chapter 5, section 5.7.1, we saw that students who received either of the two highest grades in the Vg1 common core subject *English* were more likely to elect English programme subjects than did those who received the grade 4 or lower. However, after examining grade-related factors in closer detail, it became apparent that this is only valid for the students of the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies. In the sample, respondents who had chosen at least one English programme subject had received the average grade 4.44 for the Vg1 English common core subject. The corresponding average was 4.09 for those who did not. What is interesting, however, is that

respondents specialising in Languages, Social Science and Economics studies who did not elect English, reported a mean grade of 3.79, while the corresponding grade was 4.37 for students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics subjects. In light of what is presented in section 5.7.1 above<sup>9</sup>, it seems reasonable to suggest that for students of this latter programme area, previous grade – and by extension ability – is not a crucial factor when deciding to opt out of studying English.

## 6.2 Reasons for not choosing English programme subjects

In my pilot study, which was briefly presented in section 1.4, I reported that the most striking result when examining the reported reasons for not electing English programme subjects, was that none of the explanations provided in the questionnaire appeared relevant to larger segments of the sample. In fact, for most of these questionnaire items, no more than 1/3 of the relevant respondents would *agree* or *strongly agree* to their significance for a choice not to study English. The same tendency is the case in this study.

Compared to the data presented in Ch.5 *Results A*, there is a much wider spread in the answers reported by students who have not studied English. In fact, it is frequently the case that 25-40 % of respondents may *agree* or *strongly agree* that a particular explanation has been important to them, while 30-50 % oppose or strongly oppose the same claim. This spread is reflected through standard deviation between 1.2-1.4. In short, there is little agreement among students as to whether a particular explanation has significance or not, and it is therefore impossible to conclude that any one explanation was important to a majority of respondents when they decided not to study English.

To sum up, within this group of students no explanation(s) stand out as having been important to a majority of respondents when they chose not to study English programme subjects. Instead, there are smaller groups within the sample who can agree on which explanations were important for just their choice (see table 6.5 below for details). This finding contrasts with the results which were presented in Ch.5 *Results A*, pertaining to students who have studied English. As seen for example in table 5.5, within this latter group of respondents there were in fact several explanations which received the majorities' support.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 5.6.1 states that there is a moderate correlation ( $r=0.37$ ,  $p>0.01$ ,  $N=287$ ) between previous grade and election of English programme subjects, but only for students of the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies. For students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics studies, however, no such correlation is present.

### **6.2.1 The pilot study and the present study**

In the pilot study there was one explanation which received fairly high levels of support compared to other explanations. Nearly 54 % of the relevant respondents strongly agreed that they did not *choose any of the English programme subjects because other subjects appeared more attractive*. For the survey proper, however, I decided against asking students to rate the importance of this particular explanation. The choice was made in an attempt to “force” respondents to describe why the English programme subjects were not attractive enough to be chosen. Whether or not this attempt succeeded is a different matter. Rather than resulting in one or more explanations receiving substantial levels of agreement, the effect of excluding the only statement which had gained great support in the pilot, was larger variation in the material. This could tentatively suggest that instead of there being a single, or just a few explanations which are relevant to a majority of respondents, students are torn with respect to how their decision not to elect English programme subjects may be explained.

### **6.2.2 Reasons of little or no consequence**

As stated both in section 6.2 and section 6.2.1, it is difficult to conclude from survey data that any of the hypothesised explanations of why students choose not to elect English programme subjects (item 5.1-5.20, Appendix 1), are relevant for larger segments of the appropriate population. There is, however, more agreement as to which of the proposed explanations have little explanatory power. I would argue that learning which of the possible explanations for not choosing English are rejected by students, could be almost as interesting as studying reasons of consequence. It constitutes a means to discount explanations which are unlikely to have had an impact on students, and by doing so we may get closer to an understanding of the factors which do matter.

**Table 6.4 A table presenting three of the explanations which received the lowest agreement-rate among relevant respondents when urged to explain why they did not elect any English programme subjects**

I did not choose any English programme subjects because...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
5.17...there is nothing to learn in those subjects (N=256)	48 %	23 %	21 %	7 %	1 %	1.89	1.01
5.8...I do not think I will need English when I as a student ( N=257)	64 %	19 %	10 %	5 %	2 %	1.64	1.02
5.7...I do not think I will need English when I start working ( N=252)	66 %	19 %	10 %	4 %	2 %	1.56	0.92

As can be seen in table 6.4, students generally oppose that they discontinued their English studies as a result of a disregard for the usefulness of the English programme subjects: Only 6 % claim to have been affected by a belief that the English programme subjects have little utility value for a future career (item 5.7, table 6.4), while 7 % blame lacking usefulness for future studies (item 5.8, table 6.4). There were also only 8 % who claimed that they did not choose English programme subjects because they believed there is nothing to learn from these subjects (item 5.17, table 6.4). It is therefore reasonable to assume that only a small minority of students who discontinue their English studies after Vg1 consider the English programme subjects to be irrelevant and of no practical use. Instead, most students recognise the importance of having a good command of English for both future work and study. They also seem to acknowledge that they would have learned something useful had they continued studying English. In other words, even though they did not elect the subjects in question, these students do not consider them irrelevant. A tentative conclusion can be that among students specialising in General Studies at the upper secondary level, few express the belief that the obligatory minimum foundation course (Vg1) is sufficient for every Norwegian student.

### 6.3 The survey answers

As has already been suggested, there is a large spread in the answers reported by students who did not elect any English programme subjects. Therefore, this section will not be

presenting explanations which are agreed upon by a majority of students. Nevertheless, I will review the responses as they are, and suggest how they may be interpreted.

Table 6.5 below, presents the complete overview of answers as reported by students who have not studied English programme subjects. The answers are ranked according to which has the highest percentage of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the claim, rather than by mean or standard deviation. The reason why this particular order was chosen is that the large spread in the material means that neither the means nor the standard deviations are very informative. In the sections which follow below table 6.5, I will discuss the explanations which have the largest support in the data provided, and give suggestions as to how important they appear to be.

**Table 6.5 A table presenting the complete list of responses received from students who discontinued their English studies after Vg1, regarding why they did not elect any English programme subjects. Please note that the percentages have been put in round figures, and that some rows therefore amount to slightly more or less than 100 %**

I did not choose any English programme subjects because...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	M*	St. dev
5.2...it did not fit my timetable N=257	27 %	12 %	20 %	22 %	21 %	2.98	1.49
5.16...I wanted to choose subjects which were entirely new to me N=257	21 %	16 %	24 %	34 %	6 %	2.89	1.25
5.5...it seemed boring N=257	22 %	14 %	28 %	28 %	9 %	2.88	1.28
5.10... I am not interested in language subjects N=256	24 %	18 %	23 %	23 %	12 %	2.80	1.34
5.15...because I wish to apply to a programme of higher education which requires a particular subject combination N=255	27 %	13 %	27 %	16 %	18 %	2.87	1.44
5.11...I am not good at learning languages N=256	30 %	21 %	16 %	21 %	13 %	2.66	1.42
5.13...I think I would have gotten a poor grade N=259	37 %	17 %	17 %	20 %	10 %	2.51	1.42
5.14...I am uncomfortable with speaking English in front of others N=258	38 %	19 %	14 %	19 %	11 %	2.46	1.42
5.1...I am not interested in English	26 %	23 %	23 %	20 %	9 %	2.62	1.29

speaking arts and/or Literature N=258							
5.9...they do not award extra credits N=257	39 %	11 %	23 %	22 %	4 %	2.41	1.32
5.3...I was satisfied with my English abilities after Vg1 N=259	32 %	17 %	26 %	17 %	9 %	2.53	1.32
5.4...it seemed difficult N=254	39 %	23 %	14 %	17 %	7 %	2.29	1.32
5.19...they did not sound interesting when my teacher/councillor presented them N=258	30 %	12 %	36 %	18 %	4 %	2.54	1.21
5.20...it was completely random that I did not choose English N=258	45 %	16 %	19 %	14 %	5 %	2.17	1.28
5.12...it did not seem challenging enough N=258	48 %	23 %	21 %	7 %	2%	1.93	1.06
5.6...I heard negative comments regarding these subjects from other students N=257	51 %	16 %	24 %	7 %	2 %	1.93	1.11
5.17...there is nothing to learn in those subjects N=252	48 %	23 %	21 %	7 %	1 %	1.89	1.01
5.8...I do not think I will need English when I as a student N=257	64 %	19 %	10 %	5 %	2 %	1.64	1.02
5.18...they do not fit my identity N=257	54 %	15 %	25 %	6 %	1 %	1.85	1.03
5.7...I do not think I will need English when I start working N=256	66 %	19 %	10 %	4 %	2 %	1.56	0.92

\*M= mean

### 6.3.1 Interest

Prior to this study, one of the main hypotheses regarding students who did not study English programme subjects, was that they would refer to a mismatch between personal interests and the content of these subjects when urged to explain their decision not to elect English.

The data collected show that 35 % of the relevant students report that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that a lack of interest in languages was of consequence when they chose to discontinue their English studies after Vg1 (item 5.10, table 6.5). In addition, 37 % agree that they thought the English programme subjects seemed boring (item 5.5, table 6.5), while



approximately 29 % report that a lack of interest in English language arts and/or literature (item 5.1, table 6.5) was important when they decided not to elect English programme subjects. What this indicates is that for about one third of the relevant respondents, interest-related factors were consequential when they chose other subjects than English.

One possible explanation why nearly 2 in 5 express that the English programme subjects seem boring, could be that English is a rather familiar subject. To elaborate: Norwegian students are required to study English for 11 years, and it is not unlikely that some students welcome the opportunity to elect new subjects when they are offered the chance. In fact, 40 % of relevant respondents claim to agree that they wanted to choose subjects which were entirely new to them (item 5.16, table 6.5), and that this happened at the expense of English.

### **6.3.2 Ability**

In this section I will provide an overview of the response to various questionnaire items asking students to rate the importance of ability related factors for their decision not to study English programme subjects.

Approximately 1/4 of the relevant respondents agree that they chose not to study English because they were satisfied with their English language abilities after Vg1 (item 5.3, table 6.5). What this means is that some, although far from the majority, feel that they can manage with what they have learned from the mandatory English education, and therefore choose other subjects. However, as stated in section 6.2.2 above, students generally oppose that there is nothing to learn from the English programme subjects (item 5.17, table 6.5). Consequently it seems that that even though some students claim to be “good enough” after Vg1, this does not mean that they believe they have nothing left to learn.

Next, approximately 30 % of the relevant respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that they did not choose any English programme subjects because they believed they would receive a poor grade if they had done so (item 5.13, table 6.5). An equally large percent claims to have been uncomfortable when speaking English in front of others (item 5.14, table 6.5), while another 34 % agree that they did not choose English because they are not good at learning languages (item 5.11, table 6.5). In addition, slightly fewer than 24 % believed that the English programme subjects seemed difficult (item 5.4, table 6.5). Only a minority of 9 % claimed that the English programme subject did not seem challenging enough for them (item 5.12, table 6.5). All in all it seems that for a segment of the sample, consisting of

approximately 30% of the respondents, a feeling of poor English skills and the prospect of receiving poor grades stopped them from choosing the subjects in question. Perhaps these students consider their chances of success with studying English as poor in general, or it could be that they are considered poor compared to the results they are likely to achieve in other subjects. Whatever the reason may be, the result is that they decline the option to study English in Vg2 and Vg3.

As will be addressed further below, it is more common for students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies to report poor abilities as a reason for not choosing English, than it is for Natural Science and Mathematics students. It is therefore likely that this ties in with the fact that the former group also received weaker grades in Vg1 English compared to the latter one.

### **6.3.3 External influences**

In this section, I will present data relating to questionnaire items which examine the impact of external influences on subject choice. As I see it, external influences will be most factors which do not originate from a person's self-image, interests or values.

First of all, respondents were asked whether or not they would agree that their decision not to elect English was influenced by other students' negative review of the subjects in question. According to the data collected, students generally refuse this suggestion, as only 2 % strongly agree, while an additional 7 % agree (see item 5.6, table 6.5). Apparently, students have either not heard any negative comments about the English programme subjects, or, if they have, they do not feel that these comments have had any effect on their subject choice.

While students report that they were not influenced by their peers when choosing to discontinue their English studies, quite a few blame the choice on other external factors. Most importantly, 40 % of the relevant students claim that they did not choose any English programme subjects because these subjects did not fit their timetable (item 5.2, table. 6.5). It is likely that what these students experienced was that they had to choose between studying English and another attractive subject because they were taught simultaneously. Clearly, in the case of the students presented in this chapter, the other subjects won precedence.

Next, slightly more than 1/3 of the relevant respondents claim that they did not choose any English programme subjects because they wish to apply to a programme of higher education which demands a particular subject combination where English is not

included (item 5.15, table 6.5). As we shall see in more detail below, this explanation is more popular among students of the Natural Science and Mathematics programme than those from the Languages, Social Science and Economics programme. This does not come as a surprise, as it is much more common for programmes of higher education within the field of Natural Science and Mathematics to require a particular subject combination from upper secondary school. As it happens, some of these entry restricted programmes of higher education have high entrance requirements, and it is therefore always an advantage to graduate with a decent grade average. This might explain why slightly more than 1 in 4 reports the fact that the English programme subjects do not award extra credits as a reason why these subjects were not elected (item 5.9, table 6.5).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that 19 % claim that it was more or less a chance decision that they did not choose any English subjects (item 5.20, table 6.5). At the outset, I had not expected as many as 1 in 5 of the relevant respondents to agree to this statement, and I am not entirely certain of how this result should be interpreted. As stated in Ch.5, section 5.6, there is little indication among the students who chose English that this choice happened at random. It would therefore be somewhat puzzling to find that students who did not elect English choose their programme subjects randomly. It is of course possible that students who agree that their failure to elect English was a chance decision, in reality are not able to recall what it was that really guided their choice, and that they now think it happened more or less accidentally. However this may be, it is worth keeping in mind that nearly 20 % of the relevant respondents claim that their choice not to electing English was arbitrary, as this could in fact be an indication that at least some students are not receiving sufficient guidance prior to electing their subjects.

## 6.4 Comparing groups

By now it should be evident that the data collected for this study does not identify specific factors which appear to have been relevant for a majority of respondents when deciding not to study English programme subjects. It is, however, possible that students who have more in common than simply having decided not to study English will display larger agreement rates regarding which explanations are important. Therefore, the sections which follow immediately below will examine and compare subgroups within the complete sample in

order to – hopefully – learn more about what type of student explain their failure to elect English programme subjects by reference to which explanations.

I will begin by comparing respondents by programme area affiliation, and then examine whether there are any noticeable differences between the answers provided by boys compared to girls.

### **6.4.1 Comparing the programme areas**

In this section I compare the survey answers provided by students attending the Programme Area for Natural Sciences and Mathematics Studies to the answers provided by students of the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies. There is indication in the data material that students belonging to different programme areas tend to explain their choice not to study English somewhat differently, and these differences are presented below.

#### ***6.4.1.1 Natural Science and Mathematics studies***

More than 57 % of Science and Math students report that they either *agree* or *strongly agree* that their choice of programme subjects was dictated by the programme of higher education which they intend to apply to. Popular university programmes within the Natural Sciences – such as Engineering and Medicine – require applicants to have studied particular subjects in upper secondary school, and these subject requirements do not include English. It is far less common for programmes of higher education within the Social Sciences and Humanities to require a particular subject background, and this is reflected in the material: In comparison, only 9 % of responding students from the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies report that such requirements were of consequence for their choice.

Second, nearly 42 % of respondents from the Natural Science and Mathematics Studies Programme *agree* or *strongly agree* that a lack of extra credits was important for their choice not to study English. The corresponding percentage for students from the Programme Area for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies is 9 %. It is not surprising that this explanation is much less common for students from the latter programme area, as up until time of writing, only Science and Mathematics subjects have awarded extra credit, added as a bonus to ones' final grades. From 2011 foreign languages, (but not English), will do the same.

There is in fact a positive correlation ( $r=.46$ ,  $p>0.01$ ,  $N=255$ ) between not having studied English because one wishes to apply to a particular programme of higher education and not having studied English because of the lacking extra credit. As commented in section 6.3.3 above, a great deal of the entry-restricted university programmes in Norway are difficult to gain entry to, and it helps to have as many school points as possible when leaving upper secondary school. It is therefore not very surprising to find a medium strength correlation between these two factors.

The present study is far from the only study to conclude that a regard for future studies is one of the more common explanations of subject choice among students specialising in Natural Sciences and Mathematics studies. A more detailed discussion of this particular student group and their explanations for subject choice in general can be found in Ramberg (2006) and Schreiner (2008), referred to in Ch.1. This issue will therefore not be discussed in further detail here. For now it is enough to conclude that for perhaps as many as 50 % of Natural Science and Mathematics students, a failure to elect English programme subjects can be explained by reference to future study-plans.

#### *6.4.1.2 Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies*

The section above reviewed explanations for a choice not to elect English programme subjects which were particularly popular among students of the Natural Sciences and Mathematics programme. In order to complete the picture, this section will focus on explanations which receive comparably higher levels of agreement among students of the other relevant programme area; Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies. The section will only be concerned with explanations which receive noticeably different levels of support from those provided by students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics subjects.

Approximately 47 % of relevant respondents from the Education programme for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies *agree* or *strongly agree* that they did not elect any English programme subjects because they would rather study subjects that were entirely new to them (compares to 35 % of the Natural Sciences and Mathematics students). By the time they reach Vg2 most students will have studied English for 11 years, and the fact that some are tempted by subjects that may appear not only novel and exciting, but also more directly tied to popular programmes of higher education, is not overly surprising.

In the answers reported by students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies, 36 % of those who did not elect English express a feeling of inadequacy with regards to learning languages. In addition, 31 % claim that they did not choose English because it seemed difficult, while 35 % believe they would have received a poor grade had they done so. As stated above, in section 6.1.2, this group of students generally had weaker grades in Vg1 English compared to other students. It is therefore possible that their experience of studying English has been less positive than the experience of students who were more successful. According to Expectancy-Value theory, students are not likely to display high motivation for performing tasks which they do not expect to succeed with (Dörnyei 2001), and it is rather understandable that these students prefer trying out new subject rather than continuing on with a subject which they have perhaps struggled with in the past. Consequently, the desire to study “new” subjects may not only be caused by a quest for excitement, but it could also be more of a defence mechanism, guarding students from expected failure.

#### *6.4.1.3 Summing up the differences between students of the two programme areas*

When comparing the reasons for not choosing English expressed by students specialising in Math and Science with those specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies, students of the former specialisation express noticeably higher levels of agreement that their plans for future education were decisive. Students of the latter programme area, however, report to have been more focused on trying out new subjects. In addition, these students generally have lower opinions of their own talent for studying English.

To conclude, there are noticeable differences between the two groups of students and their preferred explanations of why they did not choose to study English. Natural Science and Mathematics students seem to consider plans for the future when they make their subject choices, while those specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies appear more concerned with previous experiences of studying English.

#### **6.4.2 Comparing genders**

When comparing the answers provided by girls to those of boys, for the most part the answers of the two groups are quite similar. There are differences, of course, but except for

in one particular instance, they are rather minor. The section below will therefore only address the one aspect where the answers provided by boys and girls differ, and leave the similarities alone.

According to their answers, girls who have not chosen English are more uncertain of their own language skills than boys, and claim noticeably higher levels of agreement for explanations related to lacking abilities. As can be seen in table 6.6 below, 40 % of the girls, but only 26 % of the boys claim that they did not choose English because they believe they are not good at learning languages.

**Table 6.6** A table presenting four explanations of a choice not to elect any English programme subjects where boys and girl differ somewhat in their agreement rates. Only the percentages of respondents who have *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to these statements are included in the table.

	Boys	Girls
<b>I did not choose any English programme subjects because...</b>	% agree or strongly agree	% agree or strongly agree
...I am not good at learning languages	26 % (N=121)	40 % (N=136)
...I am uncomfortable speaking English in front of others	19 % (N=119)	39 % (N=137)
...because I wish to apply to a programme of higher education which requires a particular subject combination	38 % (N=116)	30 % (N=137)
...it did not fit my timetable	46 % (N=119)	39 % (N=136)

In addition, 39 % of the girls state their feeling uncomfortable when speaking English in front of others was of importance when they chose not to elect the subjects in question. For boys the corresponding percentage was less than 20. A tentative interpretation of these findings could be that more girls are cautious when it comes to choosing subjects, and that they assign higher value to a feeling of ability and competence than what boys do. Boys on the other hand, have higher rates of agreement for external explanations, such as issues of timetabling (46 % compared to 39 %), and requirements for entry to higher educations (38 % compared to 30 %), than what girls do.

## 6.5 Summing up

In this chapter the focus has been on students who did not elect any English programme subjects, and their reported reasons for this choice. The answers provided by these students were not as consistent as those reported by students who have studied English (see Ch.5 *Results A*), but it is nevertheless possible to identify some trends which seems to apply to at least larger segments of the population. First, it appears that about 1/3 of students who did not select English programme subjects, report a lack of interest as decisive for their choice.

Secondly, approximately the same amount of students blame lacking scholastic abilities when they are asked to explain their choice. Third, 40 % claim that they could not elect English due to issues of timetabling. In addition, 1/3 are planning to apply to programmes of higher education which demands a certain subject combination, which do not include English. As these percentages equals a higher number than 100 %, it is obvious that for some students more than one of these explanations have had significance for their choice not to elect English programme subjects.

In the next chapter, Chapter 7 Discussion, I will sum up the findings of the two results chapters, and discuss these findings in light of the theory presented in chapter 3. The focus will be on motivation, and on the types of motivation which seem to guide Norwegian upper secondary school students when they elect programme subjects.



## 7. Discussion

This chapter starts out with a brief and focussed summary of the main findings of the present thesis. Next, these findings are discussed in light of motivation theory as presented in Ch.3 *Theory*. In addition, I have provided some final remarks on the validity of the study, as well as comparison of the results that have been presented and the results of previous studies of subject choice (first introduced in Ch.1, *Introduction*).

### 7.1 Summary of findings

The aim of this thesis is to learn more about the rational behind a student's choice either to elect, or not elect, at least one of the English programme subjects – International English, Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture – in Norwegian upper secondary school. In order to address this issue, I decided to employ a quantitative method, collecting data through means of a questionnaire. It was necessary to survey two groups of students: a) students who had studied one or more of the English programme subjects, and b) students who had not. Therefore, the results of the present study were presented in two different chapters, one for each of the important population segments.

What I found, was that for students who had studied one or more of the English programme subjects, there were generally high levels of agreement, and that their subject choice could be explained by reference to the following three factors:

1. usefulness
2. a desire to learn the language better
3. ability

For students who had not studied any of the English programme subjects, no explanation(s) emerged as important for a majority of respondents when urged to clarify this particular subject choice. Instead, there were several different explanations which were either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to by between 25-40 % of the respondents. Even though students disagree on how their decision not to elect English can be explained, it seems that most students will concur that their reasons for making this choice can be summed up as motivated by one or more of following factors:

1. interest
2. abilities
3. practical reasons

In the sections which follow next, I will discuss the results of the present survey in light of theory presented in Ch.3. I will begin by applying relevant motivation theory to the data provided by English students, in an attempt to understand the underlying motive for a choice to study such subjects. Next, I will use Dörnyei and Ottó's *Process Model of L2 Motivation* as a tool to examine important mechanism behind students' decisions not to elect any English programme subjects.

## 7.2 Theoretical background for a choice to study English programme subjects

In Ch.3 *Theory*, I presented several motivation theories which all were relevant for a study of subject choice. These theories are relevant first and foremost because they provide perspectives through which it is possible to approach the subject election process in a systematic way. They may also be used to analyse the data collected in order to reach a better understanding of students' motivation for studying English.

Of the motivation theories presented in Ch.3, I will argue that Expectancy-Value theory (Eccles et al. 1983; Wigfield & Eccles 1992) provides the best framework for understanding the data reported by students who have studied English programme subjects. Below, in section 7.3, I will present why I believe this to be the case, and discuss relevant survey results in light of an Expectancy-Value framework. First, however, I will give a brief overview of how some of the other motivation theories presented in Ch.3 may contribute to our understanding of how and why students in Norwegian upper secondary school elect English programme subjects.

### 7.2.1 Orientations in the collected data

Gardner suggests that for students who study languages, their motivation may either have an integrative or an instrumental *orientation*. The first of these describes students who seek cultural integration through language learning, while the second refers to students who study a language for strictly utilitarian reasons. Other motivation theorists (Clément & Kruidenier

1983; Dörnyei & Ottó 1990) have suggested that Gardner's theory should be supplemented by at least three orientations. These should be able to explain motivation originating from a) a desire to travel, b) a wish to making friends across language barriers, and c) a wish to expand one's horizon and learn new things, also known as the knowledge orientation.

Generally, as will be discussed further when addressing Expectancy-Value theory in sections 7.3-7.3.2, the Norwegian students' answers indicate that they chose English programme subjects largely because of their usefulness. Of Gardner's two orientations it must therefore be concluded that students' motivation for English is commonly powered by an instrumental orientation. It is in a sense very fitting that students display an instrumental orientations towards a school subjects, as the objective of upper secondary school in it self is arguably instrumental. However, if one decides, as Clément and Kruidenier or Dörnyei and Ottó, to separate between an *instrumental* orientation and a *knowledge* orientation, then the motivation reported by students may not be strictly instrumental after all. Depending on whose definition one employs, a knowledge orientation can be used to describe students who are seeking out new knowledge and information through learning a language (Clément & Kruidenier) or it could apply to students who regard language learning as a means for keeping up to date and avoiding intellectual provincialism (Dörnyei and Ottó). I will suggest that Norwegian students commonly display an orientation which draws upon the ideas of the latter of the two definitions. The reason why I say this is first of all that even though students quite obviously treasure the utility value of studying English, this perceived usefulness does not seem linked primarily to formal requirements and external demands. When students report to appreciate the English programme subjects as useful for future studies and work, it seems they are valuing certain elements of studying English consistent with a knowledge orientation. Through the subjects in question students strive to become apt at using English as a communicative device, as well as a tool for acquiring knowledge. Therefore, the motivation which these students display suggests the presence of a knowledge orientation.

There is little evidence in the data collected for the present study that an integrative orientation is common among Norwegian students. I will, however, suggest that a minority of students display what Clément and Kruidenier (1983) call a *socio-cultural orientation* towards studying English. This orientation describes individuals who seek greater knowledge of the cultural and/or artistic productions of a target group, but without actual desire to integrate into the target group. Based on the number of students in my sample who strongly agree that their choice to study English was influenced either by an interest in English-

speaking cultures, or an interest in English language arts and literature, I believe that for somewhere between 1/6 and 1/4 of the students, their motivation for studying English has a socio-cultural orientation.

## 7.3 Expectancy-Value theory – a quick recap

As mentioned towards the end of section 7.2, the motivation theory which based on the survey responses appears most suited to explain a choice to study English programme subjects is Expectancy-Value theory (Eccles et al. 1983; Wigfield & Eccles 1992). In short, the reason why this particular motivation theory appears suitable for explaining Norwegian students' motivation for electing English programme subjects, is that precisely as the theory suggests, these students appear

- a. to expect success with studying English
- b. to value the outcome of studying English

Consequently, the most frequent explanation of a choice to study English programme subjects is a by-the-book example of Expectancy-Value theory.

As should be remembered from Ch.3, the most basic fundament of Expectancy-Value theory is the idea that when people decide whether or not to perform a particular action they balance what they perceive as their chance of being successful with the subjective value assigned to this success. It is the combined product of these two factors that determines whether, or not, a person is likely to engage in a particular task.

In the sections which follow directly below, I will account for how expectancy and value are present in the collected data material, as means to understand students' motivation for electing English programme subjects.

### 7.3.1 “Expectancy” in the data material

A person's expectancy of success is shaped by various individual factors and attitudes. Wigfield and Eccles (1992) believe that, among other things, perceived expectancy of success is based on previous accomplishments, perception of task difficulty and whether or not the individual in question tends to take or avoid risks.

It is plain to see from the data collected that students who elected English generally believed that they had good chances of being successful with studying these subjects at the

time of subject election. I base this conclusion on the fact that 83 % of the relevant respondents agree that they chose English because it is a subject they feel they master, while 72 % report they expected to manage a good grade. In short, most students did in fact expect to be successful with studying English programme subjects when they decide to study them.

### **7.3.2 “Value” in the data material**

Although I acknowledge the importance of feeling capable for deciding to perform a particular task, it seems to me it is the value assigned to this potential success that is the most interesting to discuss when attempting to understand what drives students to elect English.

In this section, I will use Wigfield and Eccles’ (1992) idea of four different types of task values in order to examine the significance which Norwegian upper secondary students assign the study of English. As might be remembered from Ch.3, the four types of value are *intrinsic value*, *attainment value*, *utility value* and *cost*. Cost is a negative value, and even though there will always be costs linked to making a decision, in a situation where students end up selecting English programme subjects it is apparent that the costs have been outweighed by positive value.

When reviewing the answers provided by students who have studied English, it seems the subjects in question are generally valued for having an everyday usefulness and a practical applicability, with assumed positive effects on future studies and work. The average student appears to consider studying English programme subjects as an *investment* which may be profited from not only in an educational setting, but also in professional, and most likely personal settings as well. Keeping with this data it seems reasonable to suggest that for the most part, the English programme subjects are ascribed utility value. Not only does two of the three most common explanations for a choice to study English focus on the usefulness of these subjects, but in addition, a total of 92 % of all respondents (regardless of subject choice) report to strongly agree to the following statement: *English is useful*. Overall, it appears that both students who have studied English programme subjects, and those who have not, rate being proficient in English as highly useful.

In addition, I believe the English programme subjects are ascribed *attainment value* by a great deal of students. As one may recall from Ch.3 *Theory*, the term attainment value is used in order to describe a type of value which relates to individuals conception of identity and ideals, and a type of value which it is important on a personal level for an individual to achieve. The reason why I believe Norwegian students display attainment value for studying

English is that the second most common explanation for a choice to study English, *I chose English because I wish to learn the language better*, indicates personal investment in choosing to study English, which exceeds pure utility value. Students are not electing English only because it is a useful skill in the society which they live, but they seem to have internalised the need to be competent users of English – they *themselves* wish to learn the language better.

### **7.3.3 Summing up the discussion of why English is chosen**

To sum up, it seems the following can be said of Norwegian students' motivation for electing English in-depth studies:

- Generally, students display an instrumental orientation, with some elements of a knowledge orientation
- Some students seem to display a socio-cultural orientation, although these students are a minority
- Expectancy-value theory is well suited for explaining the motivation Norwegian students have for choosing to study English programme subjects.
- The type of value which students ascribe the English programme subjects is first and foremost utility value, and secondly attainment value.

In light of the LK06 curriculum, I believe it is quite fitting that students emphasise the usefulness of choosing to study English programme subjects. As I interpret the data which has been collected, the main reason why these subjects are perceived as useful is that they offer the opportunity to develop practical language skills which will come in handy in a multitude of situations. In the syllabuses for the three English programmes subject there is a strong focus both on language learning and communicative skills, as well as to being able to adapt ones language use to a multitude of situations. It is therefore reasonable that students who elect English seem to do so precisely because they recognise the usefulness and value of being proficient in the language. In a highly globalised world, where English is the primary language for communication between individuals of different L1s, there is increased pressure on Norwegians to develop a sound English proficiency – particularly with respect to higher education and work. Today, English must be regarded as a tool for performing tasks which otherwise have little to do with typical English studies, and the reasons reported for studying English appear to match very well with this understanding.

## 7.4 A theoretical perspective on why English is not chosen

In the preceding sections, I have reviewed motivation for choosing to study English programme subjects in light of Expectancy-Value theory. Next, it is time for a discussion of reasons which influence students who do not elect English to make that particular decision. This time, the discussion will be based on the Process model of L2 motivation, as proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998).

### 7.4.1 The Process model of L2 motivation and reasons for not choosing English

The main objective of any motivation theory model is first and foremost to illustrate the many factors which influence an individual's perception of a particular task. In addition, there is also focus on important reflections which this individual makes before she is ready to commit to a choice of action. In a way these models are similar to a system of paths, where some roads lead quite directly to a decision of pursuing a particular action, while others make detours before reaching the same conclusion. At each junction, however, there are also paths which lead away from pursuing the action in question, and if an individual chooses to follow one of these, it will not be long before she has rejected the proposed action altogether.

What I propose by comparing motivation theory models to a network of paths, is that even though these models are originally created to illustrate the process of deciding to pursue a particular course of action, they may also be used for examining how some people come to discard the goal in question. By examining the models' "crossroads" it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of factors which draw away from engaging in a particular activity, for example electing English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school. I will illustrate how this works by using the Process model of L2 Motivation (1998), as proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó and presented in Ch.3. Based on the questionnaire answers I investigate which factors are important for students when they decide not to study English in Vg2 and/or Vg3. As in Ch.3 the focus will be on the preactional phase of the Process model, as this is the part which is relevant for subject election. However, as the most interesting "crossroads" for deciding whether or not to study English occurs in the *Intention formation stage* of the preactional phase, I will focus on that particular stage.

### 7.4.2 Reasons for not choosing English and the preactional phase

The first of the preactional phases is *Goal setting*. As mentioned, I will not comment excessively on this phase, because based on the questionnaire responses which I have received, all students, regardless of subject choice, appear to recognise that learning English is valuable for Norwegians, and they all seem to agree that a working knowledge of English will be helpful in their lives. There is, for instance, little evidence that some of the respondents harbour negative feelings towards cross-cultural communication in general or the English language in particular. I therefore assume that most students share attitudes, values and goals which are compatible with the decision to elect English programme subjects.

I believe it is in the second of the preactional phases – the *Intention formation phase* – that students make the considerations which determine whether or not they will elect English programme subjects. As the name suggests, the intention formation phase is the phase where favourable attitudes towards a particular activity – in this case studying English – are either converted, or not converted, from a possibility, to an intention. Generally, a person will, consciously or unconsciously, consider numerous factors before deciding whether to pursue or reject a particular action. Their decision will be based on an individual evaluation of these factors, as well as on how they are mutually ranked. What this means is that students may be very positive towards some of the outcomes of choosing a particular subject, but if they are at the same time negative towards other and more important factors, the action may very well be rejected.

Dörnyei and Ottó's Process model of L2 motivation draws upon several different motivation theories, and according to the theory, one of the first things a person considers when contemplating various actions is, as in Expectancy-Value theory, their expected success with performing the necessary task. As seen in Ch.6, approximately 30 % of relevant respondents agreed that a feeling of low abilities was of importance when they decided not to elect any English programme subjects. As is made clear through Expectancy-Value theory, it is not considered likely that a person will engage an activity she expects to fail at. This is a very human defence mechanism, and it is not surprising to find that students who struggle with language studies, decide not to study English beyond what is obligatory.

Next in Dörnyei and Ottó's model, students will conduct *Cost-Benefit calculations*. Cost-Benefit calculation means to compare the positive sides of choosing to elect English with negative factors involved, and calculate whether or not the positive factors outweigh the negative. I believe the data suggests that most students specialising in General Studies



appreciate the value of being proficient in English and recognise that the English programme subjects could provide useful knowledge and skills. If it is true that both students who chose to study English and those who do not, find that the English programme subjects are useful and of value, there must be some additional factor(s) which influence the cost-benefit calculations of students who end up not choosing English. For some students, the answer may be found in survey data which reports that approximately 35 % of the relevant respondents claimed that the reason why they did not study English was that it seemed boring to them, or because they were not interested in studying languages. For these students, it is likely that even though they recognise that studying English may come with benefits, they assign more value to studying subjects that in their eyes appear fun or interesting, leaving the cost-benefit calculations to disfavour the English programme subjects. As seen in Ch.1, Schreiner (2008), who studies subject choice in a sociological view, believes that young people today view boredom as a personal defeat, and that they perceive minimising potential boredom as the only way of staying “true to themselves”. Therefore, for some respondents, it did not help that they, on a general level, acknowledge that the English programme subjects have utility value. Other subjects still won precedence on account of being perceived as more fun or interesting.

From the data collected, it also appears that one of the more common reasons for not electing English programme subjects is that choosing English conflicts with other elements which are important to fulfil in order to reach individually defined goals. In Dörnyei and Ottó’s model, such considerations are captured under the headline of *Goal properties*. According to the pair, more explicit and important goals are likely to receive precedence over vaguer and less important goals in a conflicting situation, and during the process of subject election, such conflicts occur quite easily. There are particularly two factors which lead to goal conflicts: issues of timetabling and the existence of external demands which must be fulfilled in order to reach a particular goal. I will begin by addressing the latter of the two.

Conflicts between various goals will typically occur in instances where there is some type of external demand affecting one’s actions. In my study, about 1/3 of the respondents claimed that they did not elect any English programme subjects because they wished to apply to a programme of higher education which requires a particular subject combination from upper secondary school. In these cases, students would have had to put their goal of pursuing a particular education on hold in order to elect English. Consequently, there is an external

factor urging them to elect other subjects. For these students it is not necessarily a lack of interest or low expectancy of success which makes them elect subjects other than English. They could in fact harbour high levels of both expectancy of success and task value, but still not choose English due to external demands.

The second factor which typically leads to goal-related conflicts, is timetabling. In chapter 6, I stated that more than 40 % of relevant respondents report that a conflicting timetable was an important reason why they did not elect any English programme subjects. It is likely that this means that the students in question discovered that English was taught at the same time as another subject which they wanted to elect, and that they therefore had to choose between them. When considering students who did not elect any English subjects it becomes clear that they perceived the other subject as more appealing, and that this subject therefore gained precedence over English.

I was surprised to find that of the relevant respondents, 1 in 5 strongly agreed, while an additional 22 % simply agreed, that they did not elect any English programme subjects because of problems related to timetabling. That at least 20 %, but perhaps as many as 40 %, experienced that their choice of electing English programme subjects was constricted by the way the individual schools had scheduled their teaching, was unexpected for me. What is more, although the problem seems more severe for students of the Natural Science and Mathematics programme<sup>10</sup>, it is present for students of both programme areas. In a future study, it would therefore be interesting to examine whether timetable constraints are perceived as a general challenge for subject election, or if it is a problem specific to language (or English) subjects. In addition, it would be interesting to look into the criteria which are used by various schools for deciding which subjects will be taught concurrently, in order to learn if there is a particular reasoning behind it.

By the time all of the abovementioned considerations have been made, it seems most students will have decided whether or not they will elect English programme subjects. According to Dörnyei and Ottó's model, however, a person's intentions must pass through yet another phase before he or she can be fully ready to commit to pursuing a particular action. This phase, which is called the *initiation of intention enactment phase*, does not appear exceedingly relevant for understanding the process which leads students away from

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<sup>10</sup> Of these students nearly 1/4 strongly agreed that timetabling constricted their possibility to elect English, while the corresponding percentage is 18 % for students of the Languages, Social Science and Mathematics programme.

electing English programme subjects. For the most part, students who do not elect English will have reached the decision not to do so by the end of the intention formation phase. However, what Dörnyei and Ottó wish to express by including the initiation of intention enactment phase, is that even though a person has decided to pursue a particular action, there is still a possibility that she will not actually do so. In their model, there are several reasons for this (please consult section 3.6.1 for details) but I believe there is only one which is relevant in the possible event that students who have decided to study English end up not doing so: the existence of obstacles. It is possible to imagine that a student who has decided to elect International English is forbidden by her parent to do so, or that her school for some reason states that she will not be allowed to make this choice.

According to the data collected for this study, there is little evidence of students experiencing any such obstacles. In the pilot study, however, there was one student who reported that she had originally intended to choose English, but that her teacher had discouraged her from doing so on account of this particular student being part British. Evidently, we cannot rule out completely the possibility that some students experience that their intention to elect English programme subjects is in some way blocked from becoming reality. However, I believe this happens on rare occasions only<sup>11</sup>.

## 7.5 Summing up theoretical discussion of why English is not chosen

The Process model of L2 motivation shows how there are many factors which can lead students away from choosing an English programme subject. First of all, students may have low expectancy of success with the subjects in question, or they may not perceive the benefits of choosing these subjects as outweighing the costs of making this choice. Secondly, even if students acknowledge that the subjects in question are useful, they may not find them interesting or engaging enough to be elected. In addition, students are likely to have a variety of goals for the future, and some of these may be more pressing and/or more important to them than others. If the goals which are the most important are not in accordance with

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<sup>11</sup> The reason why I do not consider problems with timetabling a type of obstacle which hinders a formed intention for becoming reality, is that in situations where two subjects cannot be studied by the same students due to issues of timetabling, there decision of which subject to choose is made based of priority. Consequently, I believe timetabling issues belong with other goal-related conflicts.

electing English programme subjects, then it is likely that the person will pass up the chance of doing so.

This section concludes the discussion of the results of the present study in light of theory. Next, I will give some final remarks on the validity of these results, as any outcome is of little importance if it can not be considered valid for the study population.

## 7.6 Validity – some final remarks

So far in this chapter I have summed up the results of the quantitative study which was conducted for the present thesis, and discussed these findings in light of motivation theory. Before moving on to the conclusion, however, there is one additional issue which needs to be addressed: the validity of the results. Data of questionable validity will seriously affect the value of any study results. This is why it is necessary to give a brief overview of some important aspects of validity, before moving on.

In Ch.4 *Method*, I discussed the potential weaknesses of the external validity of the present survey, particularly with regards to the fact that not every school included in the sample was randomly selected. After having examined various sides of the non-randomly selected sample segment (see sections 4.9-4.9.3 for details), I did, however, conclude that my sample could be treated as a randomly selected sample. I stand by this conclusion, and will therefore argue that the most important findings of my study have reasonable degree of external validity. What this means, is that I argue that the main conclusions of this study, as presented in section 7.1 above, are transferable to the study population.

In addition to the external validity of the present study, it is also necessary to comment on *construct validity*. Construct validity is used to describe the relationship between the phenomenon which is studied and the way which the study of this phenomenon has been operationalised, for instance through the questionnaire items. In short, when examining construct validity, it is necessary to ask if the labels one is using are accurate, and if the study is in fact measuring what it has set out to measure.

The potential problem with the construct validity of the present study, originates from the fact that in some ways it must be considered an exploratory study, examining a field which has largely gone untouched by Norwegian researchers. As I was not familiar with other studies of recent date that discuss motivation for English in-depth studies in a Norwegian or Scandinavian setting, my study was designed to explore, and to cover a wide

array of angles and aspects. A possible side-effect of an exploratory study is that rather than going into detail, the study scratches the surface of the topics examined. Because the survey was not designed to focus on details, it is less suited for picking up on nuances in the way which students experience the English programme subjects. It is therefore possible that students who have been grouped as sharing the same view of the subjects in question would appear to belong to different categories if the study had been more detailed. In short, the fairly “coarse” questionnaire which was used for gathering data may not have been ideal for registering nuances in the views of students.

Because my intention with the present study was to examine a wide spectre of factors, rather than to focus on details, I have been careful when presenting results not to make too many inferences. In this way I have attempted to keep the effect of possible construct validity concerns to a minimum. Moreover, the present study has laid a foundation for more detailed studies, and in section 8.2 below, I discuss measures which can be made in order to increase the construct validity of potential follow-up research.

Furthermore, and as will be discussed below, the results of the present study are very much in agreement with previous studies of subject choice. Even though these studies tended to be a) not of recent date, b) not conducted in Norway, or c) not studying language subjects (or any combination of these), the fact that the results of the present survey is in general accordance with the results of these studies, must be regarded as an indication of validity.

## 7.7 Other studies of subject choice

In this section, I will compare the results of the present study to those of other studies of subject choice. The studies which I compare my findings to, are the same ones I presented in Ch.1, *Introduction*. I will not comment on reasons reported for choosing not to study English, as no analogous issues are in focus within the studies I will compare mine to. In addition, I will not comment on the significance of various external influences on subject choice as the present study indicates that such explanations are relevant only for explaining a choice not to study English. I will however briefly mention that as was suggested by Rodeiro (2007), the present study too found that the most important external factor affecting subject choice was the requirements of higher education. In my case, of course, this factor deflected students away from English and onto other subjects, usually Natural Science and Mathematics subjects.

### 7.7.1 Comparison with the present study

Generally, the studies of subject choice which I have examined (see for example Christensen 1980; Ibsen & Lie 1990; Ramberg 2006; Rodeiro 2007; Schreiner 2008) conclude that in addition to the influence of some external factors such as university requirements, student motivation can more or less be summed up by the following three factors:

- interest
- usefulness
- ability

As the reader should remember by now, respondents of the present study are particularly insistent that their choice to study English programme subjects was determined by the perceived *usefulness* of English, and belief in own language *abilities*. In other words, two of the three explanations listed above appear to have been of great importance for most students when they decided to study English.

Next, there is the matter of *interest*. In most of the studies of subject choice which I reviewed in Ch. 1 (see for example Ibsen & Lie 1990; Ramberg 2006; Rodeiro 2007), interest emerges as the most important factor for explaining a particular subject choice. I will now examine how well this translates to the present study. According to the data gathered for the present study, interest plays a secondary importance for subject choice, particularly when compared to usefulness and ability. Especially the straightforward interest factors examined in the survey, such as interest in English language fiction, interest in particular English-speaking cultures, or interest in the topics of the curriculum, are not rated as significant for a subject choice by the average student. However, the data does in fact show that nearly 70 % of the relevant respondents agree or strongly agree that *an interest in languages* was crucial for their choice to study English. This finding was somewhat surprising because, as mentioned in Ch.5, there are very few Norwegian students who elect in-depth studies of languages apart from English. As it was not my impression that the average Norwegian student is particularly interested in languages, an important question is how this reported interest should be interpreted.

I believe that the fact that 70 % of respondents agree that they chose English because they are interested in languages, must be viewed in light of the value these students ascribe the study of English. From their response, it seems that the average student elected one or more of the English programme subjects because she wanted to enhance her ability to

communicate, and work, in the English language. The reason why I believe this to be the case is of course that most students report to have elected English first and foremost because it will be useful for future studies and work, and because they wish to learn the language better. From these responses it seems feasible to assume that their interest in languages has something to do with communication and/or language production.

Interestingly, the two other studies I am familiar with which have examined the choice to study languages in a Norwegian context (Christensen 1980, Ibsen & Lie 1990), reach the same conclusion. Both of these studies claim that according to their respondents, *interest* was the most important factor for explaining a chose to study English. However, as in the present study, they too conclude that this interest does not originate from a liking of English language literature or culture, nor from a fondness for grammatical or linguistic aspects of language learning. Their data suggests, as does mine, that what students like most about learning English is the prospect of becoming apt at communicating across language barriers.

To conclude, I believe that the results of the present study generally agree with the results of the other studies I have examined. The main results and conclusion of these other studies appear to be more or less identical to the results here presented. It is interesting to see that studies from the 1980s (Christensen), the 1990s (Ibsen and Lie), the 2000s (for example Rodeiro 2007 and Schreiner 2008) and in the 2010s (the present study) report very similar results when it comes to why subjects are chosen. It seems that regardless of time passing and curriculums changing, the ways students choose to explain their subject choice has remained constant over the past 30 years.

## 7.8 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the findings of the present study in light of some of the theories which were presented in Ch.3 *Theory*. Expectancy-Value theory appeared particularly well suited to explaining the results pertaining to student who chose to study English, while The Process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998) provided grounds for examining the reasons for choosing not to study English.

In the sections immediately above, I have commented on the validity of the present study. I have presented some possible challenges to the validity of my study, but concluded that they are not serious enough to compromise the results which have been presented in this

thesis. The fact that most of my findings are in agreement with the results of other studies of subject choice furthers my confidence that the present study results are valid.

In the next chapter, Ch.8 *Conclusion*, I will provide suggestions for further research and outline some implications of the results of the present study.



## 8. Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, which concludes the present thesis, I begin by suggesting possible further research on motivation for studying English programme subjects in Norwegian upper secondary school. Next, I continue with a discussion of what I see as the most important implications of the findings presented in this thesis.

### 8.2 Further research

In many respects, the present thesis can be considered an initial study of its particular field. It was therefore concerned with examining a fairly wide number of factors which, hypothetically, could affect students' motivation with regard to electing or not electing English subjects. As presented in section 7.1, I believe the study was able to make some interesting, but fairly general, conclusions regarding student motivation for English. The study is therefore well suited as grounds for more detailed follow-up studies. The subsequent paragraphs describe how I believe such follow-up research should be designed.

Most importantly, I propose that the follow-up study should use a mixed-methods approach, and supplement questionnaires with the use of interviews. Questionnaires are well suited to gather information which forms the skeleton of a study, while interviews may supply "meat to the bone". Interviews provide a means through which students can express themselves quite freely, and in addition to elaborating on factors which the researcher is already aware of, they also have the potential of pointing out perspectives which otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

In order to reduce any problems related to memory, I suggest a follow-up study is conducted simultaneously to the actual subject election. In addition, I would like the follow-up study to be longitudinal in the sense that the same groups of students are studied both while choosing subjects for Vg2 and for Vg3. By conducting the survey twice on the same group of students, it will be possible not only to check if there is consistency between answers provided at different times, but it should also offer input on how motivation for subject choice changes, or evolves, over time.

I also believe it would be an advantage if the follow-up study recruited more participating schools than what the present study did. In order to minimise the effect it would have on results if some schools withdrew their participation before the second surveying, it is

a good idea to work with a larger sample. In this way, some schools dropping out will not compromise the results completely. For that reason I propose that students of between 8-10 % of the relevant upper secondary schools in Norway (20-25 schools) are recruited to answer the questionnaire. Conducting interviews takes more time and effort – both for researcher and schools – than questionnaires, and I therefore suggest that not all of these schools are asked to participate in interviews. Instead, it seems reasonable to interview approximately ten students at ten different schools (100 informants). I would also suggest that the interviews be conducted in groups of 3-5 students. There are mainly two reasons for this. First, group interviews are less time consuming than one-on-one sessions, which benefits both participating schools and the researcher. Second, students might relax and open up more if they are interviewed in the company of other students, because then the interview will appear more conversation-like and therefore less formal.

Through combining questionnaires with interviews, a follow-up study such as the one described above, has the potential to increase our understanding of subject choice in Norwegian schools. Not only should such a study provide more detailed insight into the choice of English programme subjects, but it could also prove useful as a means to learn more about subject choice in general.

## 8.3 Implications

In my opinion, two important implications have emerged as a result of the present study. The first is relevant for teaching, while the second concerns the position of the English programme subjects in Norwegian schools. Both are reviewed in the sections below.

### 8.3.1 Implication 1 - implication for teaching of the English programme subjects

As I am still a student, with limited teaching practice, I shall be very careful in suggesting how teachers more experienced than myself should do their work. However, I believe one very clear implication for teaching emerges from the data collected in this study. Fortunately, this implication is in keeping with the current English syllabuses.

As was in focus both in Ch.5 *Results A* and Ch.7 *Discussion*, students appear to choose the English programme subjects because they are considered useful, especially with regards to future study and work. Students seem to value being proficient English users, and

report that a wish to learn the English language better was important for their decision. There are thus strong indications that students select English subjects first and foremost to become equipped to tackle real-world situations involving English.

The implication for teaching which I believe is suggested from this study's results, is that in order to fulfil the wants and needs of students there must be strong focus on language production in class. Furthermore, not only should there be a focus on language production, but this production should also be diverse and related to future occupational and/or academic use. As the current English syllabus is constructed around a selection of competence aims – aims which are to be reached, but without there being any specific reference as to how – it seems the suggested focus can be achieved through lessons which are designed to reach competence aims through activities which make room for a great deal of varied language production.

### **8.3.2 Implication 2 – the standing of the English programme subjects**

In today's globalised world I believe being proficient in English is a skill which transcends lines of demarcation between groups of subjects. As English is a universal language, it could in a sense be considered the common denominator between otherwise separate fields, instead of relevant for a certain type of student only. I would therefore argue that the English programme subjects should be available for all students specialising in General Studies. However, when looking at the material reported for the present study, it appears this is not always the case. In fact, I believe the outcome of this study indicates that there is a tendency for schools to regard the English programme subjects as less relevant for students of the Natural Science and Mathematics programme, compared to those of the Languages, Social Sciences and Economics programme.

I base the aforementioned impression on the fact that in the sample, only one in four of the students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics studies have chosen to study English. In comparison, nearly 60 % of students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics studies did the same. At the outset, one might accept this difference in election rate as reflecting that students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics studies are uninterested in studying English. However, in the answers provided by this group, it is not primarily a lacking interest which explains why 3/4 of the students in this group did

not choose English. In fact, the data which I have collected indicates that students of the Natural Science and Mathematics programme recognise that they will need English both while attending higher education and when they start working, and there is only a small minority which seem to consider the subjects in question redundant and of little value. In addition, as many as 24 % *strongly agree* that they could not elect any English programme subjects due to conflicting timetables, while an additional 20 % merely agrees to the same claim.

The bottom line seems to be that quite a number of students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics studies experience that it can be difficult to choose any of the English programme subjects without compromising the opportunity to study other desired subjects. In addition, this group of students report that entry requirements for higher education place restrictions on which subjects they may choose, and make it more complicated for them to decide to study English beyond what is mandatory. The effect of entry requirements for higher education are difficult to counteract at school level, but their existence adds to the impression that students specialising in Natural Science and Mathematics subjects will have a harder time electing English than students specialising in Languages, Social Sciences and Economics subjects.

When considering the significance which students appear to place upon being proficient in English, it seems rather backwards that students specialising in Sciences and Mathematics fairly often find themselves hindered from electing English programme subjects. I would suggest that educational authorities and schools seriously consider if there is anything that might be done in order to counteract this effect. International English is one of the most popular programme subjects of Norwegian upper secondary school, and I believe all students specialising in General Studies should be allowed to study it.

In those cases where it is not possible to accommodate the timetabling so that everyone will have a chance to select English programme subjects, students may benefit from being taught according to the CLIL method. CLIL is short for *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, and is used to describe a type of teaching where subjects which traditionally have nothing to do with language learning are taught partially in an L2 (in Norway almost exclusively English). There are several ways to argue for the use of CLIL (Dalton-Puffer 2007; Paulsen 2010), but in the present context there are two reasons in particular which speaks in its favour. First, through CLIL students who have not been able to select any English in-depth subjects are allowed to continue working with the English

language. Even though the focus is no longer on explicit language learning, students who are taught under the CLIL method get the chance to develop their English abilities further through using English in a multitude of situations.

Second, CLIL appears to be very much in concord with the attitudes students have towards the English programme subjects. Students report to value English for its everyday applicability and usefulness, and believe that they will benefit from being proficient in the language for future studies and work. In a sense, this is exactly what the CLIL method does. It prepares students for real-life language use, and allow students to practice using English as a tool for gathering information and working with topics which are otherwise not related to language learning.

## 8.4 In conclusion

In the present chapter, which concludes this study of subject choice, I have suggested some guidelines for further studies of this particular issue. I have also summarised what I take to be some important implication of the study's results.

The impression which I am left with after conduction this survey is that for the most part, students specialising in General Studies have a positive attitude towards the English programme subjects. They also appear to consider these subjects relevant for real-life situation. Through studying English, students hope to prepare for academic and professional situations which will be made easier by being proficient in the language.

I would like to bring this thesis to a close with a quote from the syllabus for the common core subject English. This quote sums up my view of why the English programme subjects are important, and also seems to reflect the attitudes which students of Norwegian upper secondary school appears to have towards studying English:

[...] English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight. It will enable the pupils to communicate with others on personal, social, literary and interdisciplinary topics. It will give insight into how individuals think and live in the English-speaking world. Communicative skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between people with different cultural backgrounds. In this way linguistic and cultural competence contributes to the all-round personal development and fosters democratic commitment and a better understanding of responsible citizenship.

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## Figures

- Figure 1**, Appendix 3.1 is available in: Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J.S. (2000) "Expectancy–Value Theory of Achievement Motivation". *Contemporary Educational Psychology* **25**:69
- Figure 2**, Appendix 3.2 is available in: Dörnyei, Z., & Ottó, I. (1998). "Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation." *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* **4**:48



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - The survey questionnaire

#### **Et spørreskjema om deg og ditt forhold til engelsk**

Denne undersøkelsen prøver å finne ut hvorfor elever i norsk skole velger, eller ikke velger, de engelske programfagene. Undersøkelsen er frivillig, og svarene forblir anonyme. Alle opplysningene som kommer frem i denne undersøkelsen vil bli behandlet fortrolig. Undersøkelsen er meldt til NSD.

Undersøkelsen gjennomføres av masterstudent Kaja Granum Skarpaas ved Universitetet i Oslo. Hvis det skulle være noen spørsmål eller henvendelser angående undersøkelsen vennligst ta kontakt på [kajags@student.uv.uio.no](mailto:kajags@student.uv.uio.no).

På forhånd takk for hjelpen!

## Om dine programfagsvalg

1. Hvilken studiespesialiserende retning går du på nå? Sett et kryss

Realfag       Språk, samfunnsfag og økonomi       annet

2. Vennligst list opp programfag du hadde på VG2, og de programfagene du har nå på VG3? Nevn fagenes navn og nivå.

VG2	VG3

3. Hvilken karakter fikk du i standpunkt i fellesfaget Engelsk i Vg1?

1       2       3       4       5       6

Hvis du **HAR** tatt et/flere av følgende fag,

- Internasjonal engelsk
- Samfunnsfaglig engelsk
- Engelskspråklig litteratur og kultur

vennligst svar på spørsmål 4. Hvis **IKKE** gå rett til spørsmål 5.

4. Hvorfor valgte du engelsk programfag? Besvar hvert spørsmål ved å sette kryss i passende rute.

	Helt uenig	Delvis uenig	Verken enig eller uenig	Delvis enig	Helt enig
4.1 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi det er et fag jeg føler at jeg mestrer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg tenkte jeg ville få god karakter i faget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg ønsket å lære språket bedre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi det hørtes interessant ut da det ble presentert for meg av rådgiver/lærer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg mener det kan være nyttig i forhold til fremtidige studier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi skolen min er opptatt av at språk er viktig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi noen i familien min syntes jeg burde gjøre det	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg mener det er et nyttig fag i forhold til fremtidig arbeidskarriere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi læreplanen i faget/fagene virket spennende	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.10 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg syntes det virket enkelt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg interesserer meg for en eller flere engelskspråklige kulturer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi det passet inn i timeplanen min	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.13 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg er interessert i språk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.14 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg er interessert i engelskspråklig kunst og/eller litteratur	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.15 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg er flink i språk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.16 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg hadde hørt positive ting om faget fra andre elever	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.17 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi det passer til min identitet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.18 Det er helt tilfeldig at jeg valgte engelsk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.19 Jeg valgte engelsk fordi jeg følte at det var et fag hvor jeg viste hva jeg kunne forvente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4.20** Hvis det finnes andre årsaker til at du valgte et/flere engelske programfag vennligst spesifiser her:

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**Hvis du svarte på spørsmål 4  
vennligst hopp over spørsmål 5 og gå rett til spørsmål 6**

5. Hvorfor valgte du ikke engelsk som programfag? Besvar hvert spørsmål ved å sette kryss i passende rute.

	Helt uenig	Delvis uenig	Verken enig eller uenig	Delvis enig	Helt enig
5.1 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ikke er interessert i engelskspråklig kultur og/eller litteratur	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi faget ikke passet inn i timeplanen min	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg syntes jeg var god nok i engelsk etter VG1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi det virket vanskelig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi det virket kjedelig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg hadde hørt negative kommentarer om faget fra andre elever	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ikke tror jeg vil få bruk for faget når jeg kommer ut i arbeidslivet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.8 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ikke tror jeg vil få bruk for faget hvis jeg skal studere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.9 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi det ikke gir tilleggspoeng (som for eksempel realfagene gjør)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.10 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ikke er interessert i språkfag	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.11 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ikke er flink i språkfag	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.12 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi det ikke virket utfordrende nok for meg	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.13 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg tror jeg ville fått en dårlig karakter i faget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.14 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg synes det er ubehagelig å snakke engelsk foran andre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.15 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi den høyere utdanningen jeg planlegger å ta krever at man velger bestemte fagkombinasjoner, og her inngår ikke engelsk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.16 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi jeg ønsket å ta fag som var helt nye for meg	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.17 Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi man ikke lærer noe i faget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Helt uenig	Delvis uenig	Verken enig eller uenig	Delvis enig	Helt enig
<b>5.18</b> Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi faget ikke passer til min identitet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.19</b> Jeg valgte bort engelsk fordi faget ikke virket spennende da det ble presentert av lærer/rådgiver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.20</b> Det var helt tilfeldig at jeg ikke valgte engelsk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**5.21** Hvis det finnes andre årsaker til at du ikke valgte noen engelske programfag vennligst spesifiser her:

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### Om ditt syn på engelsk

**6.** Hva synes du om språket engelsk? Besvar hvert spørsmål ved å sette kryss i passende rute.

	Helt uenig	Delvis uenig	Verken enig eller uenig	Delvis enig	Helt enig
<b>6.1</b> Engelsk er nyttig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.2</b> Med gode engelskkunnskaper kommer man langt i arbeidslivet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.3</b> Gode engelskkunnskaper er viktig når man studerer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.4</b> Hvis man behersker engelsk trenger man ikke kunne flere fremmedspråk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.5</b> Det er viktig for meg å beherske engelsk muntlig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.6</b> Det er viktig for meg å beherske engelsk skriftlig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.7</b> Jeg er tilfreds med egne engelskkunnskaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.8</b> Min motivasjon for å lære engelsk er sterk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.9</b> Jeg har bruk for engelsk i hverdagen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.10</b> Engelsk er utfordrende	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.11</b> Nordmenn generelt er gode i engelsk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Tenk på de engelskkunnskapene du har i dag og forsøk å anslå hvor mye, i prosent, du har lært fra forskjellige kilder. Svaret ditt skal utgjøre 100 % til sammen.

KILDE	CIRKA SÅ STOR PROSENTANDEL AV ENGELSKKUNNSKAPENE MINE HAR JEG HERFRA
7.1 Engelskundervisning på skolen	
7.2 Familiemedlemmer	
7.3 Media (film, tv, musikk, internett, data osv)	
7.4 Andre kilder	

### Om din engelskbruk

8. Hvor ofte gjør du følgende aktiviteter?

	Aldri	Sjelden	Månedlig	Ukentlig	Hver dag
8.1 Leser engelskspråklig litteratur (utenom evt. skolelitteratur)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.2 Snakker engelsk i hverdagen (utenom evt. engelsktimer på skolen)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.3 Ser engelskspråklig film/TV UTEN teksting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.4 Hører engelskspråklig radio eller podcast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.5 Kommuniserer skriftlig på engelsk (feks. via internett)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.6 Hvis du regelmessig bruker engelsk i andre situasjoner enn dem beskrevet ovenfor vennligst spesifiser her:

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### Bakgrunnsspørsmål

9.  Mann  Kvinne

10. Hvilket språk er ditt førstespråk (morsmål)?

Norsk  Engelsk  Annet

11. Snakker du regelmessig engelsk hjemme?

Nei  Ja

12. Hva er din fars høyest fullførte utdanning?

Grunnskole  Videregående  Høyskole eller universitet  vet ikke

13. Hva er din mors høyest fullførte utdanning?

Grunnskole  Videregående  Høyskole eller universitet  vet ikke

14. Har du vært på ferie i et engelsktalende land?

Nei  1-2 ganger  3-5 ganger  6 ganger eller mer

15. Har du bodd i et engelsktalende land?

Nei  ja, under 12 måneder  ja, 12 måneder eller lengre

16. Har du gått på skole utenfor Norge

Nei  Ja, i et engelsktalende land  Ja, i et ikke-engelsktalende land

17. Har du hatt undervisning på engelsk i *ikke*-språkfag, som for eksempel historie eller fysikk?

Nei  Ja

18. Har du (per i dag) konkrete planer om å studere videre etter avlagt videregående skole?

Nei  Ja

19. Hvis ja til 18, hva har du planlagt å studere?

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20. Hvis ja til 18, har du planer om å ta en hel grad (bachelorgrad, mastergrad, profesjonsstudium el.) i utlandet?

Nei  Ja, i et engelsktalende land  Ja, i et ikke-engelsktalende land

**Takk for at du tok deg tid til å svare!**

**Hilsen Kaja Granum Skarpaas**

**kajags@student.uv.uio.no**



## Appendix 2.1 - Overview of all programme subjects within the Educational programme for specialisation in General Studies

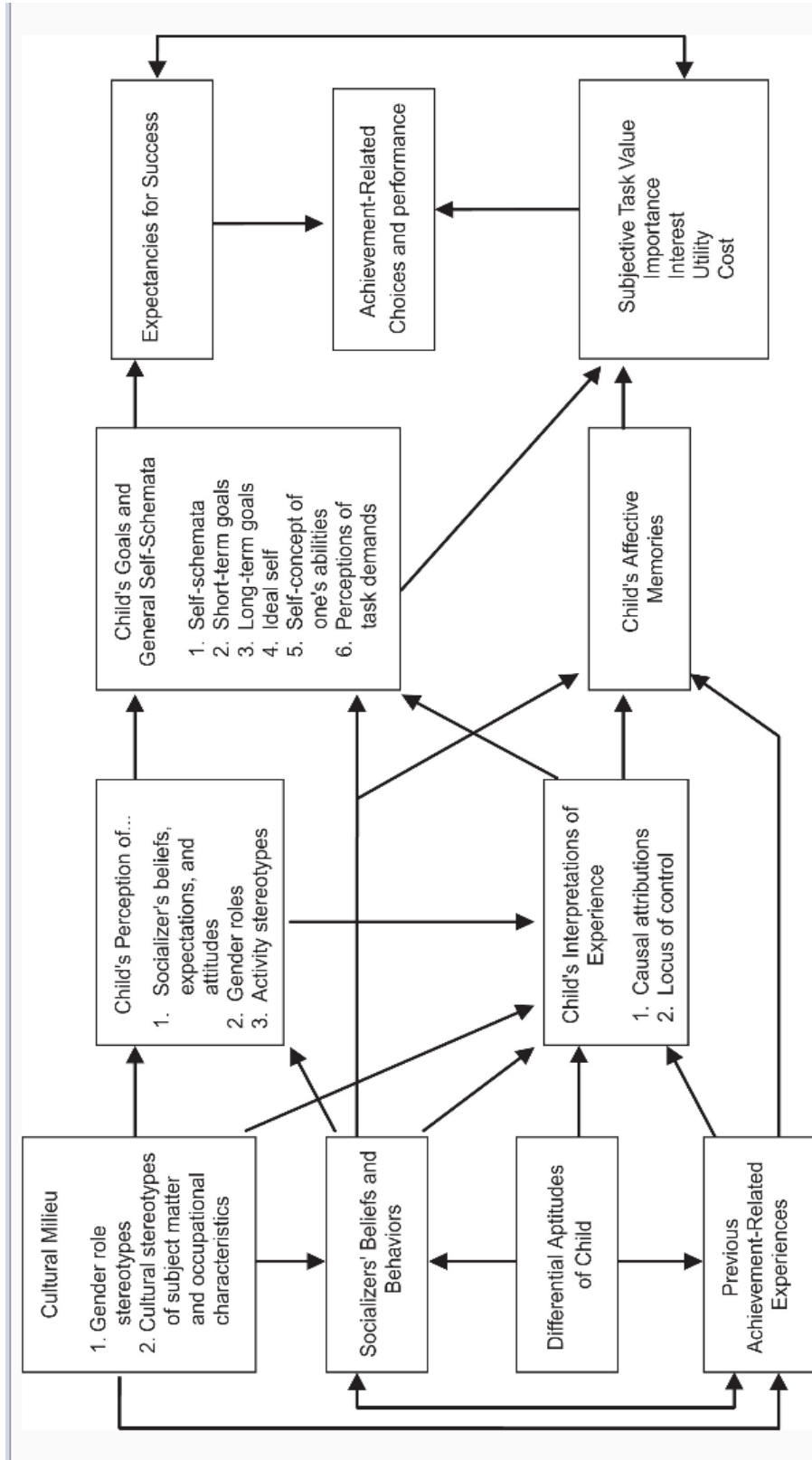
<b>Natural Sciences and Mathematics studies – subject areas</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
<b>Biology</b>	Biology 1 (140)
	Biology 2 (140)
<b>Chemistry</b>	Chemistry 1 (140)
	Chemistry 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Geosciences</b>	Geosciences X (84)
	Geosciences 1 (140)
	Geosciences 2 (140)
<b>Information technology</b>	Information technology 1 (140)
	Information technology 2 (140)
<b>Mathematics</b>	Mathematics X (84)
	Mathematics R1 (140)
	Mathematics R2 (140) – requirement
	Mathematics S1 (140)
	Mathematics S2 (140) – requirement
<b>Physics</b>	Physics 1 (140)
	Physics 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Technology and theory of research</b>	Technology and theory of research X (84)
	Technology and theory of research 1 (140)
	Technology and theory of research 2 (140)

<b>Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies – subject areas</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
<b>Ancient language and culture</b>	Ancient culture (140)
	Greek 1 (140)
	Greek 2 (140) – requirement
	Latin 1 (140)
	Latin 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Business Economics</b>	Financial Management (140)
	Economics and Management (140) – requirement
<b>Communication and Culture</b>	Communication and Culture 1 (140)
	Communication and Culture 2 (140) – requirement
	Communication and Culture 3 (140) – requirement
<b>English</b>	International English (140)
	Social Studies English (140) – requirement
	English Literature and Culture (140) – requirement
<b>Entrepreneurship and business development</b>	Entrepreneurship and business development 1 (140)
	Entrepreneurship and business development (140)
<b>Foreign Languages</b>	Foreign Languages I (140)
	Foreign Languages II (140) – requirement
	Foreign Languages III (140) – requirement
<b>History and Philosophy</b>	History and Philosophy 1 (140)
	History and Philosophy 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Law</b>	Law 1 (140)
	Law 2 (140)
<b>Marketing and management</b>	Marketing and management 1 (140)
	Marketing and management 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Media and information knowledge</b>	Media and information knowledge 1 (140)
	Media and information knowledge 2 (140) – requirement

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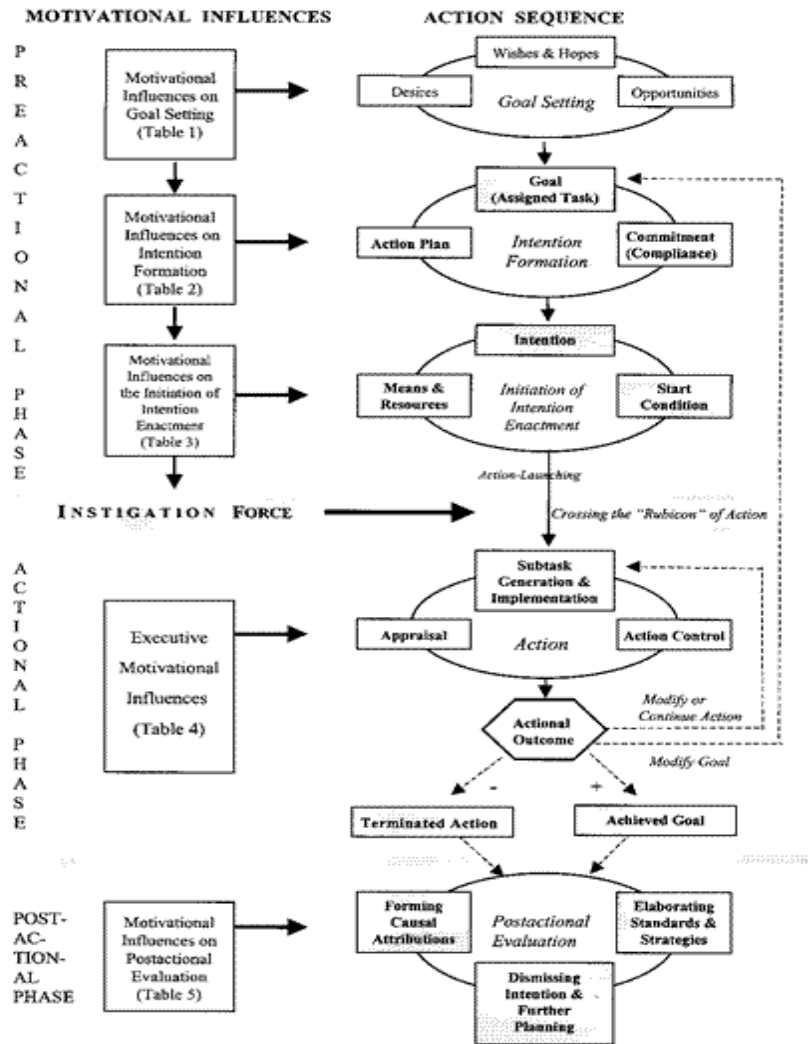
<b>Politics, the individual and society</b>	Social sciences
	Human geography
	Sociology and social anthropology
	Politics and human rights
<b>Psychology</b>	Psychology 1 (140)
	Psychology 2 (140)
<b>Sami History and Society</b>	Sami History and Society 1 (140)
	Sami History and Society 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Social Economics</b>	Social Economics 1 (140)
	Social Economics 2 (140) – requirement
<b>Tourism and Languages</b>	Tourism and Languages 1 (140)
	Tourism and Languages 2 (140) – requirement

Appendix 3.1 - Figure 1: Eccles et al. General Expectancy-Value model of achievement choices (1983)



Appendix 3.2 – Figur 2: Dörnyei and Ottó's Process model of L2 motivation

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the Process Model of L2 Motivation



## Appendix 4.1 – Example of how answers to items intended to address the same issues correlate

**Table correlating answers related to ability**

	Because it is a subject I feel I master	Because I believe I would be able to manage a good grade	Because it seemed easy	Because I have a talent for learning languages
Because it is a subject I feel I master	–	.705**	.329**	.602**
Because I believe I would be able to manage a good grade	.705**	–	.496**	.611**
Because it seemed easy	.329**	.496**	–	.331**
Because I have a talent for learning languages	.602**	.611**	.331**	–

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Table correlating answers related to interest**

	Because it sounded interesting when my teacher/councillor presented it	Because the syllabus(es) was/were exciting	Because I am interested in one or more English speaking cultures	Because I am interested in languages	Because I am interested in English speaking arts and/or literature
Because it sounded interesting when my teacher/councillor presented it	–	.558**	.192**	.162*	.233**
Because the syllabus(es) was/were exciting	.558**	–	.415**	.288**	.406**
Because I am interested in one or more English speaking cultures	.192**	.415**	–	.549**	.553**
Because I am interested in languages	.162*	.288**	.549**	–	.381**
Because I am interested in English speaking arts and/or literature	.233**	.406**	.553**	.381**	–

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table correlating answers related to usefulness**

	Because I believe it can be useful for future studies	Because I believed it will be useful for my future career
Because I believe it can be useful for future studies	–	.568**
Because I believed it will be useful for my future career	.568**	–

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## Appendix 5.1 - A table presenting the full list of questionnaire answers pertaining to why English was chosen

I chose English because ...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
1)...I believe it can be useful for future studies (N= 213)	1 %	1 %	9 %	18 %	70 %	4.56	0.79
2)...I wished to learn the language better (N= 213)	1 %	3 %	7 %	21 %	69 %	4.54	0.82
3)...I believe it will be useful for my future career (N= 213)	0 %	2 %	13 %	20 %	65 %	4.49	.79
4)...it is a subject I feel I master (N=213)	2 %	3 %	11 %	36 %	47 %	4.23	0.94
5)...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade (N=212)	2 %	5 %	20 %	38 %	34 %	3.98	0.98
6)...I am interested in languages (N= 212)	7 %	7 %	17 %	28 %	41 %	3.88	1.22
7)... I have a talent for learning languages (N= 211)	3 %	7 %	22 %	40 %	28 %	3.82	1.02
8)...I am interested in one or more English speaking cultures (N= 213)	13 %	10 %	19 %	32 %	26 %	3.48	1.31
9)... it is a subject I knew what I could expect from (N= 210)	7 %	10 %	33 %	33 %	18 %	3.46	1.09
10)...it suits my identity (N= 207)	11 %	9 %	30 %	28 %	22 %	3.41	1.23
11)...it sounded interesting when it when my teacher/ councillor presented it (N= 211)	10 %	12 %	37 %	23 %	18 %	3.26	1.20
12)...it seemed easy (N= 212)	17 %	16 %	32 %	21%	14 %	2.99	1.27

13)...I am interested in English speaking art and/or literature (N= 213)	18 %	21 %	28 %	18 %	16 %	2.92	1.31
14)...the syllabus(es) was/were exciting (N= 212)	17 %	19 %	40 %	17 %	8 %	2.79	1.14
15)...other students recommended them (N= 209)	18 %	17 %	42 %	19 %	4 %	2.74	1.08
16)...my school focuses on the importance of learning languages (N= 212)	21 %	20 %	47 %	9 %	3 %	2.53	1.01
17)...it fit my timetable (N= 213)	45 %	12 %	21 %	13 %	10 %	2.31	1.40
18)...someone in my family wanted me to do so (N= 213)	44 %	11 %	24 %	16 %	5 %	2.28	1.31
19)...at random (N= 210)	73 %	13 %	6 %	5 %	3 %	1.52	1.01

## Appendix 5.2 - A table presenting the five most common explanations for a choice to study at least one English programme subject, divided by which English subject was studied

The table includes the percentage of students who either agree or strongly agree to the respective claims, in addition to the mean answer. The table is divided by programme subject.

I chose English because...	International English N =80		Social Science English N= 74		English Literature and Culture N= 31	
	% agree or strongly agree	Mean	% agree or strongly agree	Mean	% agree or strongly agree	Mean
4.5...I believe it can be useful for future studies	93	4.63	90	4.61	84	4.45
4.8...I believe it will be useful for my future career	88	4.51	86	4.47	90	4.65
4.3...I wished to learn the language better	89	4.46	96	4.73	87	4.56
4.1...it is a subject I feel I master	71	3.90	94	4.50	90	4.32
4.2 ...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade	62	3.71	80	4.08	77	4.10
4.13...I am interested in languages	58	3.51	76	4.15	80	4.19

## Appendix 5.3 - A table presenting the explanations which have the five the highest means for a) boys and b) girls.

N =86 (boys), N = 125 (girls)

I chose English because...	Agree		Strongly agree		Mean		Standard deviation	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
...I believe it can be useful for future studies	21 %	17 %	65 %	74 %	4.48	4.62	0.84	0.75
...I wished to learn the language better	22 %	19 %	64 %	73 %	4.41	4.63	0.98	0.68
...I believe it will be useful for my future career	21 %	19 %	59 %	70 %	4.36	4.59	0.88	0.70
...it is a subject I feel I master	38 %	35 %	50 %	46 %	4.34	4.18	0.82	1.00
...I believed I would be able to manage a good grade	38 %	38 %	37 %	33 %	4.05	3.94	0.96	0.99
...I am interested in learning languages	29 %	27 %	29 %	49 %	3.59	4.10	1.28	1.11