

## *A study into the motivation of Swedish military staff officers to learn English*

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Among those teaching a group of Swedish military officers, little is known about motivation to learn English as part of a one-year military staff course. This research therefore aims to explore possible motivational characteristics while attempting to identify ways in which they may be theoretically linked to Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self system. A particular area of interest is the officers' view of their motivation having taken part in a one-year English course and also an international military staff exercise which was conducted in English. The study used a two phase mixed-methods design, with an interview study and a follow-up questionnaire. Qualitative data were gathered by conducting seven individual interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule. Analysis of the qualitative data allowed themes to emerge. The questionnaire used in phase two was based on these themes and enabled the qualitative data to be triangulated. Twenty-eight Swedish military officers responded to the questionnaire. A variety of key variables were confirmed and it was possible to view them using the chosen theoretical framework. The Ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience were found to be particularly important motivators. It was also found that despite the officers' high levels of motivation, their willingness to exert effort on learning is relatively low. It may therefore be concluded that teachers could address this through a focus on motivational teaching practice. Overall, this research provides insight into L2 motivation within a participant group which has not previously been studied.

*Keywords:* L2 motivational self system; self-determination theory; instrumental motivation; possible selves; military English

## 1. Introduction

Being some of the key concepts in second language acquisition (SLA), motivation theories attempt to explain why people start, how long they will persevere and how much effort they will put into learning a second language (L2). For the present author, as a teacher of English to military staff officers, an interest in motivation in this study comes initially from what may be considered a misconception related to teaching in a military context, that is that military officers are always well-disciplined and highly motivated individuals and therefore will be positively motivated in all areas of their study. However, this may not be taken for granted as there are varying levels of motivation evident within the participant group. This is reflected in the quality of written assignments, attendance and contribution to discussions and group work in class. This research aims to identify which motivational characteristics exist within the group. The likelihood that there will be a range of such characteristics leads to the need for a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand them better. In this case, the theory which may provide it is the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005), which has proven to be effective in describing motivation in various contexts (e.g., Macintyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). The study set out to answer three main research questions in order to gain a better understanding of the motivation that Swedish military officers have to learn English.

1. How can the motivational characteristics of Swedish military officers studying English as part of a staff officer course be described?
2. Can the characteristics which contribute most significantly to the effort that Swedish military officers are willing to use when learning English be viewed in line with the L2 motivational self system?
3. How do officers view their motivation in light of their participation in international exercises and training?

## 2. Literature review

As one of the aims of this research project was to view the participants' motivation in relation to the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), it is necessary to consider some key theories which have contributed to this model and which are therefore linked. These include in particular the ideas of integrativeness and instrumentality, self-determination theory (SDT) and the psychology grounded work on possible selves that formed the basis of L2 motivational self system.

## 2.1. Integrativeness and instrumentality

Gardner (1985) outlines the connection between the idea of motivation and the need for goals (orientations). The best known of these is *integrative orientation*, associated with a situation when a highly motivated learner has what Gardner and Lambert (1972) described as a genuine interest in the culture and community of the L2 native speakers, as well as a desire to communicate with or become part of that community, or, in other words, to integrate with the L2 group. Gardner (1985) describes this further as a “motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings towards a community that speaks the language” (pp. 82-83), while also acknowledging the alternative to this, namely *instrumental orientation*. This more practical approach may be related to learners’ need, for example, to gain better employment opportunities or to pass important exams.

This distinction has been the subject to some criticism from, among others, Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006) or Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009). The idea to relate closely with the L2 community, and even integrate with it may be relevant in bilingual learning environments such as Canada. However, for many students, learning occurs within their own community with no immediate or identified need to be close to an L2 group abroad. However, it may be worth pointing out that this does not clearly reflect the possibility that L2 groups may exist in international communities of practice, as is the case with the present study. This need for a reconceptualization of the concept of integrativeness played a key role in the development of the L2 motivational self system.

## 2.2. Possible, ideal and ought selves

Other models of motivation go further in describing the potential usefulness of the clear visualization of the potential consequences and rewards of alternative courses of action. Markus and Nurius (1986), for example, who introduced the theory of *possible selves*, linking ideas related to a clearly visualized concept of one’s self with possible motivated action. Possible selves refer to an individual’s hopes or fears of what might, or might not occur in the future, for example what the individual might become and also what he or she may be afraid of becoming. Oyserman and James (2009, p. 373) define possible selves further by stating that they “are desired and feared images of the self already in a future state”, adding that they “differ along a continuum of detail”, which reflects the amount of detail and vividness that might exist in one’s possible self-vision.

Related to this, Higgins (1998) proposes the theory of *regulatory focus*. He uses the terms *promotion focus* and *prevention focus* to differentiate between two types of possible selves. A promotion focus leads to regulated behavior in

order to achieve positive outcomes, such as personal gain. This is visualized as the *ideal self* and includes thoughts about the way an individual wishes to be. This can be contrasted with a prevention focus, referring to the desire to avoid negative outcomes. This pressure is often viewed as coming from external sources and is labeled the *ought self*. It is possible at this stage to identify a link between these concepts, that is promotion and prevention focus, and Gardner's (1985) previously outlined concept of instrumental motivation.

Taguchi et al. (2009) sought to learn about these different types of instrumental motivation (i.e., prevention and promotion focus), attempting to discover how they relate to each other and also to ideal and ought-to L2 selves. They conclude that there are indeed two distinct types of instrumentality and also that they can be linked to the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. Interestingly, they also suggest that a single event may be viewed as either the result of promotion or prevention focus dependent upon the actual context. They give the example of learning a language to work abroad, which may be promotional for those interested in working overseas, or preventional if learning was the result of the employer demanding the move.

### 2.3. Self-determination theory

A widely known model of motivation is the one based on the dichotomy between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that intrinsic motivation may lead to motivated behavior, in this case action related to successful L2 learning, which occurs as a result of the learner's general interest in learning a language. This contrasts with extrinsic motivation, a concept related to instrumentality, whereby learners are motivated by a practical sense of obligation or necessity, with the avoidance of negative consequences or alternatively a reward as the final result of learning.

Deci and Ryan (1985) place extrinsic motivation on a scale, breaking it down into four types, from the least to the most self-regulated, that is: *external regulation*, *introjected regulation*, *identified regulation* and, finally, *integrated regulation*. They explain that external regulation exists when learning is a result of threats or rewards which are applied by external forces. Introjected regulation is also connected to external pressure, although it is based on a feeling of guilt that is eventually accepted by the learner and may, for example, contribute to the motivation to learn an L2. Identified regulation exists when learners are willing to accept that an activity may be necessary and useful in order to achieve something they value. For example, learners may wish to improve their English in order to become part of an online community or to play video games. Finally, integrated regulation, far from the other end of the scale, occurs when learners

choose to engage in certain behavior such as, for example, developing L2 proficiency, because it fully corresponds to the learner's needs and wants. Ortega (2009) suggests that this type is the closest to intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory thus provides a model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation which reflects the complexity of L2 motivation and which can be compared to other relevant theories such as the L2 motivational self system.

#### 2.4. The L2 motivational self system

The L2 motivational self system consists of three main parts. Firstly, the *ideal L2 self* exists if the person wishes to speak an L2, as is the case, for example, of a senior officer who has an international command position, leading to the understanding that there is the need to communicate with colleagues in English. This may involve traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives or perhaps a reference to integrated and identified regulation, as outlined by Ryan and Deci (2000). Alternatively, the *ought-to L2 self* views motivation leading to L2 learning as stemming from the desire to avoid negative outcomes. Similarly to Higgins' (1998) model, these may be externally imposed and are connected with the prevention focus of instrumental motivation. Finally, the *L2 learning experience* places a premium on the motivational power of a learner's immediate learning situation, including teachers, syllabuses, colleagues and peers and also the reinforcing effect of being a successful learner. Dörnyei (2009) claims that this third element is necessary in order to address the fact that some learners may initially be motivated not by the vision of a future self but by positive learning experiences. They may simply find out that they are good at learning an L2, have an inspiring teacher or meet ambitious peers.

In terms of empirical validation, the L2 motivational self system has been found to be an effective and reliable motivational framework in a variety of studies, including, for example, those by Ryan (2009) and Taguchi et al. (2009), who confirmed a positive relationship between the ideal L2 self and integrativeness. Regarding the functioning of the L2 motivational self system, Oyserman, Bybee and Terry (2006) claim that self-regulation is not automatic but depends upon the existence of certain conditions. These conditions are advocated by Dörnyei (2009) and include the need for a detailed and clear future self-image in the imagination of the individual. This may need activation in some cases since not everyone is likely to possess such a vision. Another consideration is the need for the activation of the self-image. Ruvolo and Markus (1992) believe that this may be achieved through simulation. For example, individuals may be required to imagine failure or success before a task, with those imagining positive outcomes typically being more successful.

### 3. The present study

In this study a mixed methods approach was adopted, with interviews and a follow-up questionnaire. Qualitative data was collected using seven, thirty- to forty-minute, semi-structured interviews with seven Swedish army officers. The initial aim of this stage was to allow themes to emerge from the discussions in order to identify categories of motivational variables present within the sample population. In the following quantitative phase, these identified categories were used to develop a questionnaire with the intention of testing the themes for generalizability within the immediate context of the Stabsutbildning (SU) course.

#### 3.1. Research context

The full-time course in which the participants of this study enrolled is called Stabsutbildning, which can be translated as Staff Officer Course, taken by military captains who are to be promoted to the rank of major. This generally marks the stage in their careers when they leave field duty and progress to organizational and administrative roles in the staff component. The course covers practical and academic themes and includes taking part in NATO military exercises, during which English is used. The course program includes a weekly, 90-minute English lesson to provide study support. As is common in higher education in Sweden, most course literature is not translated from English, meaning that students must face the additional parallel learning challenge of reading academic texts extensively in English. A content linked syllabus provides opportunities for students to discuss their coursework in English. In addition, the students know that in the future, upon graduation and eventual promotion to higher rank, they will probably find themselves working in an international environment where they will work independently in English.

A key event in the program is the officers' participation in a large-scale military exercise, the Combined Joint Staff Exercise (CJSE). This exercise, held in Sweden each year, is a training activity which offers students a chance to take part in a ten-day simulated peace enforcement operation. The simulation is run in real time and involves officers from Sweden, Finland, Baltic States and a variety of NATO nations, meaning that the working language is English. Tasks in which the learners will be involved include writing different types of orders, giving briefings to large and small audience and taking part in a variety of meetings, all in English. This presents a challenge to the Swedish officers, not only because they need to be able to operate at a high level both linguistically and professionally during the exercise, but as they are also forced to work together with officers from other nations whose language proficiency levels vary.

### 3.2. Qualitative phase

During a period of one week, seven Swedish army officers were interviewed on the subject of motivation and learning English. The interviewees were all students of the same one-year course at the Swedish National Defence University (SeDU). They gave written consent and were happy to participate in the hope that their comments would have a washback effect upon future planning for the SU English program. The interviewees were male, aged between 32 and 38 with a minimum of ten years of military working experience. All of them took a placement test at the start of the course and turned out to be between *Common European framework of reference* (CEFR) B2 and C1 levels, with some notable exceptions representing the C2 level. For this reason, it was possible to conduct the interviews in English.

The interview schedule (Appendix 1) was developed to elicit information about the interviewees' motivation to learn English. The first section encouraged them to talk about their previous experiences in using English for work, followed by reflection on their general language learning experiences. This led to the discussion about their future learning goals, external reasons for learning, the role of military exercises and the current English course. It can be seen that despite the aim of allowing themes to emerge from the interviews, the questions can be loosely identified with the three components of the L2 motivational self system, or other frameworks of motivational analysis.

The interview schedule was piloted in the form of a talk-aloud protocol with two other students enrolled in the same program. Some adjustments were made at this stage due to prompts which were misunderstood or led to irrelevant data. A number of closed questions were also identified at this stage and reworded in order to allow a fuller response. Following the interview stage, all recordings were transcribed using pseudonyms to ensure the privacy of the participants. After this the data was analyzed using grounded theory, a three-stage data analysis method and the following six categories or themes were identified: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, two types of instrumental motivation, promotion focus and prevention focus, and, finally, two aspects of what may be viewed as L2 learning experience, that is the course and exercises, referred to in this study specifically as CJSE.

### 3.3. Quantitative phase

The questionnaire was conducted in June, 2015 at SeDU. Twenty-eight staff officers, all enrolled in the Staff Officer course, participated. Twenty-six were male and two female, aged 32 to 44. The questionnaire (Appendix 2) initially comprised 35 items and was developed on the basis of the themes which emerged

after the data analysis of the qualitative interview stage. With this in mind, the questionnaire was intended to elicit data on six sources of motivation, as well as an additional criterion measure of intended effort to learn English. The choice of the criterion measure for this study is partly based on the fact that all participants are required to attend English lessons each week as part of the SU program, discounting any interest one may have in their motivation to initiate L2 learning as this is taken for granted. For this reason, it was considered most relevant to view motivation in combination with the amount of time and effort the participants are willing to spend learning and improving their existing English proficiency. This is reflected in the questionnaire items, which include such statements as “I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English” or “If I received an optional English assignment, I would volunteer to do it”.

Table 1 Internal consistency reliability of the initial scales.

Multi-item scale	Initial Alpha	Best possible/Final Alpha
Criterion measure	0.746	0.746
Instrumental – promotion	0.771	0.771
Instrumental – prevention	0.728	0.728
Ideal L2 self	0.867	0.867
Ought-to L2 self	0.821	0.821
Learning experience – course	0.604	0.661
Exercise CJSE	0.671	0.691

The six motivational variables chosen on the basis of the interview phase results were those previously identified in the interview phase. The inclusion of scales for the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self was based on the desire to establish a link in this particular context between these variables and those of promotion and prevention focus. The items were adapted from existing motivation questionnaires, in particular those used by Taguchi et al. (2009) in a survey project in Japan, China and Iran (see Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010). Although these items constituted an appropriate data collection tool which broadly covered the themes which were already chosen, it was necessary to adapt and reformulate some of them to make them more suitable for adult learners in a military context. The statements in the items were rated on the basis of a six-point Likert scale, with *strongly disagree* (1) at one end and *strongly agree* (6) at the other. Construct validity and internal consistency were estimated by calculating Cronbach’s alpha (see Table 1). In this case the value of Cronbach’s alpha for two of the scales, that is *Learning experience* and *Course and exercise CJSE*, led to the removal of one item in each of the scales. As a result, the values were improved and could be regarded as satisfactory.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Qualitative phase

As mentioned above, the following six categories or themes were identified during the interviews: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, two types of instrumental motivation, promotion focus and prevention focus, and, finally, two aspects of what may be viewed as the L2 learning experience, that is the course and exercises (CJSE). The last two themes may appear to be similar enough to be combined into one factor. However, there is a key difference between them, since the course mainly provides support for academic study whereas CJSE is a practical workplace simulation, which suggests that the students' response to each may be different.

Comments suggesting the importance of an instrumental promotion focus of motivation are common throughout the interviews during the qualitative phase. Many of the interviewees mention the fact that they are ambitious and that their career is their primary motivational force. Johan, for example, said, when thinking about the introduction of new technical systems for air defense officers: "I will have quite many meetings and I think I'll have much documents to handle according to ILS and so on. I'm forced to be better in English and I don't see that as a problem. I just know that in the future I'll meet English and I'll need better English". Further evidence is offered by Peter, who adds: "You will not have as much responsibility as you will have if you are a good English speaker". Magnus identifies the need to be more proficient with the chance for promotion and advancement within the military system, and appears to use this as a motivator. Stefan perhaps states the promotion focus best by explaining: "According to my job, I think it's important, the higher up you get, to be able to speak, listen and write English professional texts". The interviews yielded comments which could be specifically related to ideal L2 self and the power of visualization, including reference to having a picture of a future self who uses an L2 as an important part of one's work. Björn talks about having a vision of his future self when considering his goals, which is visible in the following excerpt: "Simply, it's becoming a better staff officer and if you get command of a unit, to become a good commander and, you need English skills to do that". In terms of the ought-to L2 self and instrumental motivation with prevention focus, many of the interviewees expressed the idea that they feel external pressure to learn English. Björn commented, for example: "The biggest worry in a staff is that people misunderstand you and that has happened during this exercise. I don't know if anyone has misunderstood me but people misunderstand one another". The fear of miscommunication during a high stakes activity is echoed by Johan, who said: "I will make major mistakes or do wrong decisions if I don't understand

what I'm reading when I'm sitting in front of a huge English document. I have to understand them and I've got to be familiar with English. If not, I should not sit on such a task". A further aspect of this which was evident in the interviews is the fear of not being taken seriously by peers within the military organization. Björn is just one of the interviewees who said: "(...) sometimes you see older colleagues, very good ones, but they're not always good in using the language and they lose some confidence there, confidence and respect". The loss of respect and confidence in the eyes of others is further expressed by Björn, who added: "(...) if you're a competent staff officer but your language is not so good, they'll judge you that you're not competent enough". Finally, the interviewees discussed motivation and their learning experience. The first category of learning experience related to the course. Some interviews reflected the importance of this aspect through comments on the interviewees' satisfaction with the course in general. Jonas stated that the course had been "(...) great for me because it inspired me to do more of the reading and choose literature given by the school in English rather than Swedish". Gustav also stated: "You have the connection to our other subjects. It's important to motivate us even more if we could find books and texts and working with a text we're actually reading in another course, that's of course a motivation factor and we can have synergies with other courses".

However, the majority of related interview data focused more often on difficulties experienced during the students' course of study, mainly regarding time management and the prioritization of English in the overall SU course syllabus. Gustav made a typical comment when saying: "I think everyone needs to learn more and I don't know how that would fit in the tight program of SU". The possibility that this issue might have a negative impact on the intended effort to learn English was further explored by Björn, who introduced the idea that this issue could also be linked to ought-to L2 self, which is visible in the following comment: "I think we are back to the question of what's relevant to me right now, to survive. To survive this week, I have to pass this exam and then the English is not important. If you change it and say Thursday next week you have a briefing for the commander, you'll think it's really important". The view of the CJSE exercise and its part in the interviewees' motivation was relatively positive. This suggests that the students enjoyed the experience and found it to be useful in terms of preparing them for the likelihood that they would have to use English as part of their work. Comments in the interviews support this. Jonas, for example, stated: "Attending any exercise will address the fact that you need to be able to read English in the military form (...) so in the longer run it inspires me to learn more about the processes in English, since all the documents are in English". This focus on the importance of being able to read extensively in English was a common theme in the interviews and could also be linked to the

course content and learner expectations in this area. Peter added: "I think this was good, being forced to join some kind of exercise like this in an early stage on the SU course and I would have been more motivated in the English classes".

In summary, the interviews were effective in identifying a number of themes which appear to have some influence, both positive and negative, on the officers' motivation to devote time and energy to their study of English in this particular context.

#### 4.2. Quantitative phase

The results of quantitative data analysis were to a great extent a reflection of the data gathered in the interviews. However, it will be seen that there were some initially unexpected results, particularly when looking at the mean scores for ought-to L2 self and prevention focus, which were prominent themes during the interview phase but initially proved to be less important statistically. All the data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS version 23.0. Descriptive statistics from the analysis of the completed questionnaires are provided in Table 2. The highest mean values, rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 6 were ideal L2 self ( $M = 4.58$ ), L2 learning experience – course ( $M = 4.43$ ), promotion focus ( $M = 4.42$ ) and L2 learning experience – CJSE exercise ( $M = 4.38$ ). Ought-to L2 self ( $M = 4.07$ ) and prevention focus ( $3.29$ ) scored the lowest. The mean value of the criterion measure amounted to 3.5 in this case, a value that was lower than those for all the variables except prevention focus.

Table 2 Mean values of motivational scales in descending order.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Ideal L2 self	4.58	1.06
L2 learning experience – course	4.43	0.92
Instrumental – promotion focus	4.42	1.00
L2 learning experience – CJSE	4.38	1.02
Ought-to L2 self	4.07	0.86
Instrumental – prevention focus	3.29	0.95

When presenting the results of the quantitative phase and making references to the interviews, it is useful to present the key relationships between the motivational variables under investigation as such. Table 3 provides an overview of the correlation coefficients between the chosen motivational variables and the criterion measures. When looking at the correlations between the different variables, it can be seen that promotion focus is strongly correlated with ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, as well as CJSE, indicating that they are connected. Likewise, ought-to L2 self correlates significantly with promotion focus and ideal

L2 self, as well as having a strong negative correlation with prevention focus. This negative correlation is surprising, as there might be the expectation that ought-to L2 self is similar in nature to having a prevention focus or, in other words, that external pressure and the need to avoid negative consequences related to failure, might lead to the need for improved learning. This is therefore a result which needs further research because, based on the present data set, a full explanation of the phenomenon cannot be offered. The remaining relevant correlation links promotion focus with the CJSE. Of all the variables, only promotion focus has a significant correlation with the criterion measures. Also, promotion focus is the variable which was found to have significant correlations with the greatest number of other variables.

Table 3 Correlations between motivational variables.

	Criterion measures	Promotion focus	Prevention focus	Ideal L2 self	Ought-to L2 self	Course	CJSE
Criterion measures	1	0.46**	-0.05	0.26	0.30	0.18	0.18
Promotion focus	0.46**	1	-0.17	0.80**	0.71**	0.15	0.46**
Prevention focus	-0.52	-0.17	1	-0.17	-0.43**	-0.27	0.01
Ideal L2 self	0.26	0.80**	-0.17	1	0.69**	-0.002	0.27
Ought-to L2 self	0.30	0.71**	-0.43**	0.69**	1	0.36	0.30
Course	0.18	0.15	-0.27	-0.002	0.36	1	0.22
CJSE	0.176	0.46**	0.01	0.27	0.30	0.22	1

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

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Ideal L2 self and promotion focus

Data analysis suggests that promotion focus and ideal L2 self are of central importance when considering motivation within this particular context. Promotion focus correlates strongly with both the criterion measures and the ideal L2 self, indicating that there is both a connection between the variables and also an opportunity for motivational intervention in this case. The results suggest that the officers are not directly motivated by the desire for integration in the traditional integrative sense as they do not specifically, or rather knowingly, refer to the wish to be integrated into a community of English L1 speakers in the sense

that they want to emigrate to an English speaking country or show any particular interest in the culture of any English speaking regions. What may be interesting, though, is that during the interviews no comments at all were made which directly related to this, despite the fact that, as a result of their career choice and education, the interviewees will most likely be working in an environment where they will come into contact with and to some extent become part of an international military community which uses English as its working language. Although they may not have considered such a context in line with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) idea of integration into a community of L1 English speakers, it can be claimed that the learners' social learning context could have an influence on their motivation.

In fact, the participants are in some ways quite unique in this respect as the SU students are likely to have to integrate at least part of the time into the community of NATO/UN military officers whose lingua franca is English. The extent to which this community can be compared to those which were part of Gardner's (1985) earlier studies in Canada is debatable, although the fact that English is the official working language among a group of diverse L2 speakers should not detract from the possibility that the NATO and other international command communities might be described as linguistically dominated by advanced English language users. In short, the likelihood that they will be able to reach a position of influence within their organization is partly dependent upon having advanced level communication skills in English, with officers lacking such skills becoming marginalized within the command structure as a matter of practicality. As Magnus commented, "Being able to manage a language equals command", which implies that those who are not sufficiently proficient are less likely to succeed and in effect be integrated into the command structure.

Additionally, Dörnyei (2009, p. 23) states, "(...) the label *integrative* is ambiguous because it is not quite clear what the target of the integration is, and in many language learning environments it simply does not make much sense". However, although there is a growing belief that learners today lack an L1 English speaking community to which they aspire, but rather acquire a bicultural identity (Arnett, 2002), the participants in this study might be said to have such a community. Many members of an international military staff organization are L2 English speakers, but in the context of NATO, for example, there are likely to be as many L1 English speakers within the group, and their linguistic superiority is equally likely to set the cultural tone. Although the data suggests that they are not fully aware of the implications of this for their language learning, there may be ways of raising awareness of this kind through participation in the international military community by means of exercises as well as other types of international engagement. It could also be argued that the participants have a genuine interest in the community they wish to join. Jonas claims that "(...) to be

honest, I've never dreamt of anything other than being in the military". The link to a specific career path or area of interest and the way in which that can be motivating may be part of a number of other models of motivation, including self-determination theory in the form of, for example, identified regulation and is not necessarily an indication of a traditional integrative motivation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the learners seem to have a genuinely strong interest in military theory and its international practice, which can be exploited to motivate them to work harder to learn English as long as the conditions and context are appropriate.

However, the data points towards a more complex situation, which is better explained by using the framework of the L2 motivational self system with reference specifically to ideal L2 self, in which it is possible to identify such an element of integrativeness. As the officers are in the process of identifying with and to some extent visualizing their ideal selves as commanders in multinational communities, they still have a picture, or goal, which is often related to their careers. They may not refer directly to the desire to be accepted within the community of NATO officers (note that Sweden is not a NATO member but still engages in NATO operations as a member of the Partnership for Peace organization), but the mere fact that the participants have chosen to pursue their military career path to the extent that they are studying to become staff officers suggests that they have an ambition for promotion that is in line with the questionnaire results. As demonstrated by earlier research, ideal L2 self and promotion focus display a clear correlation (Taguchi et al., 2009). Taking the high mean values for both of these factors and the strong correlation between them identified in this study into account, it might be said that promotion focus and ideal L2 self work in the same way in the context of language learning among this group of military officers. However, although this may seem to corroborate the assumption put forward by Dörnyei (2005) that having a well formed ideal L2 self leads to increased effort to learn an L2, in this context the level of the criterion measures is nevertheless low. Perhaps this can therefore be viewed as an indication that some kind of motivational intervention would be effective and appropriate in this case.

## 5.2. L2 Learning experience – CJSE

One of the key motivational variables emerging from the interviews was the Combined Joint Staff Exercise (CJSE). It is clear from both the mean score of 4.38 and the significant correlation with promotion focus that taking part in the exercise is significantly linked with the participants' motivation. As previously mentioned, learners may have difficulty in creating and sustaining a credible and vivid visualization of their future selves. A possible solution to this may lie within

Ruvolo and Markus' (1992) belief that simulation can play a role in the development and activation of ideal L2 self. In a military context, role playing and exercises are central to the education and training of military personnel. This is exemplified by their participation in CJSE, as well as other similar training events which take place during the duration of the course. It is therefore worth considering how this kind of event may be useful when attempting to evaluate and increase motivation in this context as well as accepting the idea that positive visualization can lead to increased motivation and subsequent success.

The interviews also mentioned that the CJSE was additionally an opportunity for the learners to identify their weaknesses in their current English level and the possible problems which these may create. Comments were made regarding the stress of being misunderstood and the need to be a better communicator when working in such multinational environments. This may be seen as linked to both ideal L2 self and promotion focus, going some way to explain the correlation with promotion focus, although it might at first appear to be linked to prevention focus, based on a fear of what might go wrong and related negative consequences, Taguchi et al.'s (2009) assertion that promotion and prevention should be identified based on the actual context may be worth giving some consideration. Here too one can see the issue of internalization and a link to self-determination theory. It is possible that the strong correlation with promotion focus results from the fact that not making mistakes and being misunderstood are part of the learners' positive self-image as an effective and respected military commander rather than a fear of failure.

### 5.3. L2 Learning experience – course

The mean value for the variable L2 learning experience – course was second the highest and stood at 4.43. This warrants the assumption that, in this particular context, aspects related to the actual course being studied were important motivators. In this case, a direct link between the syllabus and the participants' other obligations appears to be something that has a strong influence. Björn states: "If you do something in the English lesson and you think it's no use for me, it (motivation to learn English) will go down". The students are pragmatic and have very little time to spare during their working week. The syllabus has to reflect this and, the closer the link to their final goal, which is the successful completion of the overall SU course and subsequent promotion to higher rank, the higher the likelihood may be that they will be willing to devote time and effort to their language studies. In general, there appear to be strong indications that the participants' motivation is influenced by the course aspect of L2 learning experience within the L2 motivational self system. Further integration with

the other subjects taught in the program would possibly be beneficial. Based on the interviews, with the backing of statistical analysis, it would likely be worthwhile to reassess the direct relevance of the syllabus.

#### 5.4. Ought-to L2 self and prevention focus

Both ought-to L2 self and prevention focus scored slightly lower than the other factors in terms of mean score ( $M = 4.07$  and  $M = 3.29$ , respectively). This suggests that they had a relatively weak influence on the learners when compared with ideal L2 self and promotion focus. This is somewhat surprising as the interviews yielded a considerable number of comments which suggested that these variables might be significant. However, although relatively low, ought-to L2 self still obtained a mean that was slightly higher than the criterion measures, so should not be viewed as irrelevant. Nonetheless, it is interesting that ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self correlate strongly. This may imply that the students are motivated in both ways at the same time. Deci and Ryan (1985) offer an explanation for the results with the help of different degrees of extrinsic motivation. In the military context, this may be an example of integrated regulation, the adoption of behavior as a result of full acceptance that it is part of the learners' needs. The proximity of this to intrinsic motivation and thereby the correlation in this study with promotion focus and ideal L2 self could be thus explained. Still, the fact that ought-to L2 self correlates less strongly with the criterion measures leaves one with the challenge of finding a way to activate this motivational opportunity.

The idea of ought-to L2 self is interesting from the perspective of those teaching in the military context as it can be linked to some of the observations made by Taguchi et al. (2009). The impact of context related to whether motivation is viewed as either promotion or prevention, ideal L2 self or ought-to L2 self may be visible in this context. Björn mentions in his interview that "In the military context, everything you do is in a way kind of rated: good, bad, all the time, everything you do. A commander uses the wrong word and it's very funny, everybody's laughing". This fear of not being taken seriously is repeated throughout the qualitative data set. As a reflection of ideas about what a competent and well-respected commander should be in the military context, this motivation can in fact be understood as having promotional focus or as part of ideal L2 self.

#### 6. Conclusion

The overall aim of this study was to learn more about the motivation to learn English which is manifested by Swedish military officers, with the additional desire to interpret their motivation in terms of L2 motivational self system. A particular

area of interest was the view of the motivation of officers who had taken part in a one-year English course and also an international military staff exercise which was conducted in English. In order to do so, the most important motivational characteristics were initially identified through the implementation of a qualitative interview phase. These emergent themes were then tested for validation through a questionnaire, completed by the remainder of the officers within the group. It was found that the most important motivational characteristics for the sample group may be viewed in line with L2 motivational self system. Ideal L2 self and promotion focus can be seen as central in this context. The correlation between these as well as the criterion measures thus implies that, in addition to being a key to motivation, this area offers an appropriate opportunity for intervention, as it can be the focus for activities designed to foster motivation. In particular, one might view the military context and the necessity for international communication and, as a result, the need to join multinational military coalitions and organizations, as being a unique situation which also ought to be exploited when trying to raise learners' motivation. Surprisingly, this aspect might additionally be linked to the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972), in so far as there appears to be an element of integrativeness in the need and subsequent desire to join what may be described as an English speaking community. However, this may be redefined as the wish to bridge the gap between the officers' current state and their goal, namely being fully accepted members of the international military community. As claimed by Taguchi et al. (2009), the tenet of integrativeness redefined as ideal L2 self is appropriate and effective. It appears that the same claim can be made for this small context as well.

It was also confirmed that the experience of taking part in an international exercise is important for the officers. A high mean score and correlation with promotion focus may lead to the conclusion that the officers are influenced by the experience and indeed potential exists for such an event to be an even more pivotal part of their training. A practical limitation is the fact that the exercise takes place at the end of the course, meaning that any related increase in motivation may not be of immediate benefit as the learners will almost immediately lose the opportunity for organized tuition and professional language feedback upon their graduation and return to work. This suggests that the inclusion of similar, if smaller in scale, learning events throughout the course may be effective. It is also noteworthy that different aspects of the English course itself were also seen to play a vital role in motivating the officers, both positively and negatively. This also fits in with L2 motivational self system which includes the crucial component of the L2 learning experience.

A final point is that, although the officers have seemingly high levels of motivation, their criterion measures of willingness to exert effort on learning

are relatively low. On the basis of this, it may be finally concluded that an attempt made by teachers to address this through a series of activities and strategies might be needed. An overview of motivational teaching practice provided by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) includes producing more relevant teaching materials, setting learner goals, providing appropriate feedback or even the creation of a supportive atmosphere. In light of the importance of ideal L2 self, activities which attempt to create and maintain an ideal L2 self-image may also be useful in this context. It would be interesting to observe and measure the effectiveness of such action as part of a future study.

Finally, it should be admitted that the study suffers from a number of limitations. In particular, it is admittedly a small-study conducted among a group of learners in only one country, which means that there is no possibility of making generalizations to a wider context. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the empirical investigation has provided crucial insights into L2 motivation within this particular context which may be of interest and relevance for teachers and planners in the future.

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Appendix 1

*Interview schedule*

<p>Can you tell me something about your job? In what ways do you use English in your work? How do you use English in your private life? Have you served abroad? (When? Where? Why?) How did you use English at that time? How did this experience change the way you feel about English?</p>
<p>When did you start learning English? (When, where, etc.? For sample description) What are the strengths and weaknesses of your English? How has your English improved during the past year? (How? Why?) What are you doing to improve your English? How much time are you willing to spend on improving your English? How much effort are you willing to spend on improving your English?</p>
<p>What are your professional goals for the future? In what way do you ever imagine yourself using English as part of these goals? (What do you see?) In what way do you visualize yourself using English professionally in the next five years? (What do you see?) How has this image changed during the past year? Why do you think these changes happened?</p>
<p>What kinds of external pressure do you feel to be better at English? What worries do you have about not being good enough at English? (What do think might happen as a result?) What are the differences between your personal goals in English and what you are required to do for work?</p>
<p>How has the language training you have received in the last year helped you? What would you like to change about the language training? How have staff exercises such as CJSE changed the way you feel about your English? What kinds of English training would you like to have in future? (Why?) What do you particularly like or dislike about the process of learning English? How have your colleagues contributed to your feelings about learning English this year?</p>
<p>Is there anything more you would like to add about learning English?</p>

## Appendix 2

*Motivation Questionnaire*

*This survey is conducted as part of a research project conducted as part of the MA TESOL (Distance) program at the University of Lancaster (UK). The aim of the study is to better understand the motivation to study English of Swedish military officers studying the SU course at FHS. There are no right or wrong answers and you do not need to provide your name. The results of the survey are to be used for research purposes only. The questionnaire consists of thirty-five statements. For each statement, please show how much you agree or disagree by circling a number from 1 to 6.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

(Example) if you strongly agree with the following statement, write this:

I enjoy watching films 1 2 3 4 5 **6**

1. I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I would study English, even if it were not required. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. If I received an optional English assignment, I would volunteer to do it. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I think I am doing my best to improve my English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I see studying English as a priority above other studies. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Studying English is important to me because I may need it to continue my military career. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Studying English is important to me because I would like to spend time working abroad. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. Studying English is important because a good leader must be able to communicate in English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. Studying English is important for me to be better able to understand course materials in English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Studying English is important for me to write texts related to my profession. 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I need to study English to avoid miscommunication with overseas colleagues. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. If my English is not good enough, colleagues may not have confidence in my ability to command. 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. If my English is not good enough, people will not take me seriously. 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. If my English is not good enough, I will lack the self-confidence to perform in a multinational environment. 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. If my English is not good enough, it is possible that I will put my colleagues in danger. 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. Whenever I think of my future career, I picture myself using English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. I can picture myself speaking to an audience in English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. I can picture myself as someone who can use English fluently. 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. I can picture myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues. 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. The things I want to do in the future require me to use English. 1 2 3 4 5 6

21. Studying English is important because an officer is supposed to speak good English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. Studying English is important because colleagues will respect me more if I have good English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. If I learn English, I will not let my organization and colleagues down. 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. It will have a positive impact on my career if my English is good. 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. Learning English is important because people around me expect me to have good English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. The English course was taught at the correct level for me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. I feel that the SU course schedule allowed enough time to study English effectively. 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. The English course integration has helped me my other studies. 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. I believe that the English course content was relevant to me as a future staff officer. 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. The English course lived up to my expectations. 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. Taking part in CJSE increased my interest in learning English. 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. The English course prepared me effectively for the language demands of CJSE. 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. I enjoyed using English during my participation in CJSE. 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. I would have benefitted from more staff exercises conducted in English during the year. 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. I felt that my English level improved due to my participation in CJSE. 1 2 3 4 5 6

#### Background Information

In order to assist in more effective data analysis, please also provide some basic (anonymous) personal information.

36. What is your gender? (Please underline): Male/ Female
37. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
38. What is your service? (Please underline): Army/Navy/Air Force/Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
39. How old were you when you started learning English? \_\_\_\_\_
40. Have you ever used English whilst serving abroad? (Please underline): Yes/No

Thank you for your help!