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and Education**

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Teachers' Perspectives on Value-Creating Learning in
English Education: Interpretation, Curriculum
Connections, and Its Impact on Student Motivation in
Swedish Lower Primary Schools

*Lärares perspektiv på värdeskapande lärande i engelskundervisning: Tolkningar,
läroplanskopplingar och dess påverkan på elevers motivation
i svenska lågstadieskolor*

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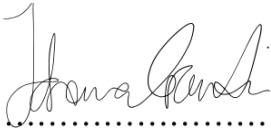
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Abstract

Value-creating learning has the potential to revolutionize English education by transforming passive instruction into dynamic, meaningful experiences that deeply engage students. This study explores how Swedish lower primary school teachers (1-3) interpret and implement value-creating learning in English education, focusing on how it relates to curriculum goals. By integrating real-world contexts into the classroom, value-creating learning fosters student motivation and strengthens their confidence and communicative abilities in English.

Through qualitative interviews with seven lower primary school teachers, this study uncovers the transformative opportunities and challenges of implementing value-creating learning. Teachers who embraced student-centered and interactive approaches saw their students become more motivated, engaged, and willing to take risks in their language learning. However, implementation varied significantly depending on teachers' confidence in their English proficiency. Those with lower confidence tended to rely more on structured, textbook-based methods, limiting students' exposure to authentic language use.

Despite these challenges, our findings highlight the extensive benefits of value-creating learning when successfully integrated. By making English relevant to students' lives and fostering real-world communication, this approach can bridge the gap between curriculum goals and student engagement. To unlock its full potential, teachers need greater support through professional development and clearer curricular guidance. To further the research of our study, value-creating learning should be investigated and refined to maximize its impact on English education.

Keywords: Value-creating learning, English education, student engagement, real-world learning, student-centered, confidence, motivation.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences in second-language education (Wiman, 2023). One approach gaining attention in Swedish primary schools is *value-creating learning* (Wiman, 2023), which connects classroom activities to real-world contexts, fostering a sense of purpose, student motivation, and engagement through student-centered learning. Rather than completing tasks simply to meet requirements, students are encouraged to understand the purpose and see their learning as relevant beyond the classroom by recognizing both the intrinsic and extrinsic value (Wiman, 2023).

English is a core subject in Sweden, and students frequently engage with the language outside of school through social media, gaming, and other interactions. However, this extramural exposure often leads to a gap between students' informal language use and their motivation in formal education (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Some students disengage from classroom instruction because it does not reflect their experiences or because they feel their existing knowledge is sufficient. This presents a challenge for teachers, who must create relevant and meaningful English lessons while aligning with the national curriculum (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

The Swedish curriculum emphasizes the importance of creating meaningful learning environments that motivate students and support their development of communicative competence (Skolverket, 2024a). It is explicitly stated under the aim that English education should allow students to develop confidence in using English in various situations and for diverse purposes. It further states that students should be encouraged to relate spoken language and texts to their own experiences and interests, making the learning process more relevant and meaningful (Skolverket, 2024a). Additionally, the curriculum highlights the importance of helping students adapt their language use to different purposes, audiences, and contexts. (Skolverket, 2024a). However, the practical implementation of these principles remains a challenge for educators, particularly in bridging the gap between students' extramural English exposure and their classroom engagement. Despite its potential to motivate and engage students,

limited research has explored value-creating learning in English education. Studies by Wiman (2023) and Lackéus (2022) highlight strategies such as connecting assignments to real-life applications and encouraging active participation, offering key insights into enhancing student engagement and motivation in Swedish education. However, limited research examines how teachers interpret and implement value-creating learning strategies in relation to curriculum requirements. Most research on motivation in English education focuses on students, leaving a gap in how teachers implement engaging strategies (Johansen et al., 2023; Fenyvesi, 2020; Vassiloudis & Chalda, 2024).

To address this gap, this study investigates how Swedish lower primary school teachers (1-3) integrate value-creating learning in English education. Through interviews, this study examines how they interpret and implement value-creating learning in English education, including the challenges and opportunities they encounter. By understanding teachers' perspectives, this research aims to contribute to more effective English instruction related to curriculum goals and students' experiences. This study contributes to the teaching profession by providing insights into how teachers in grades 1-3 can enhance student motivation and engagement through value-creating learning while ensuring a connection with curriculum goals.

2. Aim and Research Questions

This study explores how Swedish lower primary school teachers (1-3) implement value-creating learning in English education and how it relates to the curriculum. It examines how teachers interpret and apply curriculum guidelines to design engaging lessons that foster student motivation. By analyzing its practical application, the study provides insights into the strategies teachers use and how value-creating learning contributes to student motivation and a deeper connection to English as a foreign language.

Research Questions:

1. How do Swedish lower primary school teachers interpret value-creating learning in relation to the curriculum goals in English education?
2. What challenges and opportunities do teachers experience when integrating value-creating learning in their English education?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of value-creating learning on students' motivation, engagement, and the relevance of English in real-life contexts?

3. Theoretical Background

In this section, we present the theoretical background of our study. This includes explanations of key terms and summaries of existing research related to our aim and research questions. By exploring the chosen key terms, this section examines their interaction within the framework of second-language education and how they relate to curriculum guidelines and theoretical perspectives. In addition, it is important to note the limited amount of time assigned to English instruction in Swedish primary schools, particularly grades 1 to 3, where only 60 hours of English education are spread across these three years (Skolverket, 2024b). This constraint poses a significant challenge for teachers in terms of creating meaningful and engaging lessons that relate to the curriculum goals and effectively incorporate value-creating learning.

3.1 Value-Creating Learning, Motivation, and Curriculum: Key Connections in English Education

Value-creating learning (*värdeskapande lärande*) is a Swedish educational approach aimed at making learning more meaningful by connecting content to real recipients and authentic situations (Wiman, 2023). Wiman (2023) argues that this approach enhances motivation by incorporating student-centered projects like climate campaigns and fundraising, fostering problem-solving, collaboration, and responsibility. Furthermore, Wiman (2023) emphasizes that value-creating learning strengthens students' understanding of society and their role as active citizens through authentic and real-life activities. This approach is particularly important in the early years of education (1-3), when young students need motivation and engagement to build confidence in learning English (Pinter, 2017; Wiman, 2023). By adopting a value-creating approach, teachers can design meaningful lessons that not only enhance students' language skills within the classroom but also help them apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, which is an essential aspect of the curriculum.

In line with Wiman (2023), Lackéus (2022) extends the concept of value-creating learning, emphasizing that creating value for others in education goes beyond mere academic achievements. He highlights the importance of engaging students in relevant social activities where they actively contribute to solving real-world problems. Lackéus (2022) argues that such learning experiences foster entrepreneurial skills such as creativity and collaboration, preparing students for an ever-changing world. Wiman (2023) and Lackéus (2022) underscore the motivational power of value-creating activities, helping students connect their work to real-world impact beyond the classroom. Incorporating motivation and engagement into these activities is essential, as it not only connects students' learning to authentic contexts but also boosts intrinsic motivation, making the learning process more meaningful and personally relevant (Wiman, 2023).

Motivation and engagement are central to the learning process as they are directly linked to students' confidence and willingness to learn. According to Wiman (2023) and Lackéus (2022), value-creating activities with real-world relevance can enhance students' intrinsic motivation, leading to deeper engagement with learning. However, the effectiveness of these activities depends on thoughtful implementation, teacher support, and student interest. When students feel that their contributions matter, their motivation to engage increases. A supportive classroom environment fosters confidence, encouraging students to take risks, ask questions, and actively participate in learning. Engagement involves students' invested effort, interest, and participation in their education (Pinter, 2017). In English education, this sense of security and meaningful engagement can significantly improve participation and learning outcomes (Pinter, 2017).

Wiman (2023) emphasizes that value-creating learning aligns well with curriculum goals, making it a valuable tool for meeting educational requirements. Curriculum goals outline what students are expected to achieve and guide teachers in ensuring academic and personal success. While the curriculum provides clear objectives, it is up to teachers to interpret how best to support their students, considering the most effective learning strategies and environments. This flexibility allows educators to incorporate tools such as value-creating learning into lesson planning, particularly in foreign language education.

In this study, the Swedish national curriculum for compulsory school serves as the foundational framework, specifically the guidelines for English in primary education years 1-3. While providing a clear structure, the curriculum allows flexibility in meeting objectives, making it an ideal context to explore how Wiman's (2023) value-creating learning supports goal achievement. We used the 2024 English version translated by *The Swedish National Agency for Education*, with the used excerpt available in Appendix B.

English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the process of learning English in a context where it is not the dominant language (Pinter, 2017). In Swedish schools, English is taught as a foreign language, meaning that students primarily encounter it in formal instruction rather than daily life. Second language (L2) learners develop their skills through social interactions, formal instruction, and real-life experiences. Factors such as motivation, age, and prior language skills can influence their progress. The term L2 is commonly used in second language acquisition research to describe individuals developing proficiency in a non-native language (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2022).

3.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (2017), explains human motivation through three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals develop intrinsic motivation, engaging in activities for inherent satisfaction, enjoyment, or curiosity, such as learning English for personal interest and social interaction. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures, like studying English solely to earn good grades or meet teacher expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In this study, SDT provides a framework for understanding how value-creating learning can enhance student motivation in English education. By connecting learning to real-world contexts, value-creating learning can foster autonomy, giving students a sense of control, and competence, helping them feel capable, and relatedness, and creating meaningful connections (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As Wiman (2023) suggests, these factors contribute to stronger intrinsic motivation,

making English learning more engaging and relevant. This study focuses on intrinsic motivation as outlined in SDT, highlighting how these psychological needs support students' internal drive for learning.

3.3 Previous research

This section presents selected previous research, highlighting articles relevant to value-creating learning and our research purpose. We focused on existing research related to value-creating learning in primary education. The first sources we found were the books by Wiman (2023) and Lackeus (2022), which focus on value-creating learning in the context of Swedish schools. Their work primarily explores the subject of Swedish, emphasizing the importance of giving students a clear purpose for every task they engage in throughout the school day.

Following this, we explored previous research through articles and studies that were retrieved from Google Scholar and ERIC (via EBSCOhost). Few studies focused on value-creating learning; however, those we found emphasized value-creation through activities, teaching methods, and relevant theories. These articles are still relevant to our study as they address motivation and engagement in education. A number of these articles correspond to value-creating learning frameworks, and some focus on L2 students, which is relevant to our research in English education. Our study differs by focusing on teachers' perspectives on value-creating learning in the English classroom, particularly its connection to the curriculum. Below, we summarize the articles and their relevance to our study.

3.3.1 Studies on Value-Creating Learning in Education

One article directly connected to value-creating learning in schools is “The Role of Value-Creating Education and Ubuntu Philosophy in Fostering Humanism in Kenya” (Odari, 2020). Odari (2020) explores *Soka Education* and its connection to *Ubuntu Philosophy*, focusing on how value-creating learning fosters students' social and personal growth. Ubuntu Philosophy emphasizes community and collaboration, where students learn from each other and take responsibility for their own and others' learning. Soka, which translates to "value-creating" in

Japanese, supports students' development by connecting their learning to personal experiences and interests while emphasizing moral and social growth (Odari, 2020). The study illustrates how Soka Education theories align with collective learning, helping students find deeper meaning in their education and boosting their motivation (Odari, 2020).

3.3.2 Motivation and Engagement in Learning

Another study by Johansen et al. (2023) supports meaningful, student-centered education. This study researched the competence of student outcomes when engaging with real-life scenarios versus traditional abstract activities. Both groups used the same statistical methods and software, just different approaches to methods through student-centered relevance. The results showed that students who worked with relevant, real-life scenarios not only understood more but also retained the knowledge better. This article bases its research questions on SDT (Johansen et al., 2023).

Similar research produced by Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024) describes how they studied students who worked on a project to create a school magazine, actively participating in every stage. The students chose their own topics, as long as they were related to the school environment, fostering a collaborative, student-centered learning environment. This approach made the project a motivating factor for writing about real-world, relevant events. The main finding was that students' motivation increased significantly as they were less focused on formal tasks like spelling and sentence structure (Vassiloudis & Chalda, 2024). Both studies connect real-life situations to education, enhancing motivation, engagement, and well-being. They aim to make learning relevant to students' future goals within their school context, resonating with value-creating learning. By linking tasks to real-world scenarios, these studies show that relevant and engaging tasks have positive effects on students' motivation and emotional well-being (Johansen et al., 2023; Vassiloudis & Chalda, 2024). Reading these articles broadened our search to include motivation and engagement in students' education and the English subject.

3.3.3 Value-Creating in Language Education

A study conducted by Saeed and Zyngier (2012) examines the impact of motivation on student engagement, which is directly relevant to our research on value-creating learning in English education. Saeed and Zyngier's (2012) results show that intrinsic motivation demonstrated strong authentic engagement, active participation, and valuing tasks. While those motivated by external rewards (e.g., grades or approval) showed more superficial engagement and less meaningful learning. The authors used SDT when analyzing and presenting their findings. This article contributes to making it possible to discuss challenges and opportunities for teachers to motivate students by using relevant assignments and activities. Similarly, Fenyvesi's (2020) study explores how students' motivation in English varies with age, time, and prior experiences. The findings suggest that these alterations pose challenges for teachers striving to maintain motivation in English learning.

3.3.4 Teachers' Role and Curriculum Interpretation

Ross (2023) study examines how teachers interpret and implement curriculum documents to meet students' needs. The study emphasizes that curriculum-making is a dynamic process where educators adjust their approaches based on resources, student needs, and pedagogical goals. By exploring how teachers engage with and modify the curriculum, Ross (2023) provides insights into how formal educational goals are transformed into meaningful learning. This perspective is particularly relevant to our study as it helps contextualize how Swedish teachers interpret and integrate value-creating learning within the national curriculum.

3.3.5 Research Gap and Contribution of This Study

In conclusion, previous research emphasizes the role of meaningful, motivating, and engaging activities in building students' confidence. Studies suggest that integrating real-life scenarios into education enhances intrinsic motivation and deepens language learning. However, most existing research focuses on students' perspectives, leaving a gap in understanding teachers' views on value-creating learning, particularly in English education. The limited studies on teachers' roles

and their interpretation of the curriculum from a value-creating perspective highlight the need for further exploration. Therefore, our study aims to address this gap by examining teachers' perspectives on implementing value-creating learning in English classrooms for L2 learners, with a specific focus on its connection to curriculum goals.

4. Method

This study employs qualitative interviews to explore how Swedish lower primary school teachers implement value-creating learning in English education, focusing on its connection to curriculum goals (Skolverket, 2024a) and its impact on student motivation and engagement.

A qualitative approach is chosen to capture teachers' interpretations and the challenges and opportunities they experience in applying value-creating learning. Qualitative methods are beneficial for understanding complex human experiences as they focus on participants' reflections rather than numerical data (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015). Since motivation and engagement are subjective, this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how teachers perceive and integrate these concepts into English education. To gather data, semi-structured interviews were conducted, following an interview guide with open-ended questions designed to identify themes. Interviews provide valuable insight into respondents' thoughts and emotions, influencing their perspectives on value-creating learning (Alvehus, 2023). This method allows for flexibility and consistency in the interviews, making it easier to analyze teachers' strategies and interpretations.

To achieve the study's aim and address the research questions, the following sections outline key methodological components. The first subheading, participants, describes the inclusion criteria, such as teaching experience, familiarity with value-creating learning, and involvement in English education. The next subheading explains the reasoning behind the chosen materials for this study. The procedure details the data collection process, including participant recruitment, interview execution, and steps taken to ensure reliability. The analysis presents the use of thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes, offering a structured yet flexible interpretation of the data. Finally, ethical considerations discuss measures to protect participants' rights, including informed consent, confidentiality, and adherence to ethical guidelines.

4.1 Participants

Seven English teachers from six different schools in the southern region of Sweden participated in this study. The participants were lower primary English teachers with varying working experiences ranging from 4 to 25 years. When receiving their education, not all participants had the subject English in their education, but some of them have gained the credentials through professional development over the years. The schools the teachers work at are both public and private; however, they are all a part of the Swedish education system and follow the national curriculum for primary schools.

The participants selected were English teachers in Swedish lower primary schools, specifically working in the 1-3 grades. Lower primary schools include K-3; however, in the Swedish national curriculum, there is no specific curriculum for English in preschool. Our study is focused on these early years of education, as we aimed to gather insights from teachers who are actively shaping the learning experience for young students. Teachers from different schools could provide a range of more diverse experiences, enriching our understanding of the role of English teachers in lower primary education.

4.2 Materials

To collect data, a semi-structured interview guide was used, consisting of open-ended questions designed to explore how teachers apply value-creating learning in their English education. The interview guide also covered how teachers interpret the curriculum as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the process (Appendix B). It was structured around our research questions, with additional prompts that will allow for a natural flow in the conversation that can allow the participants to share further insight and reflections. The questions focused on value-creating learning and its relation to the national curriculum (Skolverket, 2024a). Some questions specifically addressed the teacher's perspective on how value-creating learning influences students' motivation and confidence. Notes were taken during the interviews to document responses.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences while maintaining consistency with the research questions (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015). This qualitative approach is particularly relevant as it captures the teacher's perspectives on how value-creating learning impacts students, engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. Alvehus (2023) highlights that semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structure and openness, providing a structured approach while allowing for deeper insights based on participants' responses. This flexibility enables a nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences with value-creating learning in English education.

4.3 Procedure

The first step we took was to identify the teachers who met the criteria for our study. Firstly, they had to be Swedish lower primary school teachers, teaching the English subject. Secondly, we wanted all teachers to be based in the southern region of Sweden. Once identified, we collected their contact information to reach out and invite them to participate. The timeline from identifying the aim and purpose of our study to establishing contact with the selected teachers was approximately 2 weeks before we began conducting the interviews. We utilized connections through our internship schools and others in our network to ensure a diverse selection of teachers from different municipalities.

All teachers received the same email, which included detailed information about the study, the purpose of the interview, and their ethical rights. Upon agreeing to participate, the teachers were sent a letter of consent outlining their rights and the study details one more time (Appendix C). They were asked to read through the form and sign it before participating. After receiving the signed consent, we scheduled interviews at times convenient for the teachers, ensuring minimal disruption to their teaching responsibilities.

When conducting the interviews, we wanted to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and avoid potential influence from a single municipality on how value-creating learning is implemented.

Therefore, the interviews were divided between us, focusing on the two ends of southern Sweden. Three out of the seven interviews were conducted in person to facilitate a more natural interaction, while four were carried out digitally via Zoom due to different circumstances, which prevented in-person meetings. Since both the teachers and the researchers are Swedish and reside in Sweden, the interviews were conducted in Swedish. This choice ensured that participants could express themselves as clearly and naturally as possible, providing well-formulated and detailed responses. As a result, the responses were translated into English for this study.

The interviews were designed to address the research questions related to value-creating learning and motivation. All participants were asked the same set of questions in the same order, starting with general background questions 1–4, followed by questions directly linked to research questions 1–9 (Appendix A). By doing this, we made sure not to guide the teacher's responses in any specific direction to maintain an unbiased data collection.

We used a printed extract of the curriculum guidelines for reference, ensuring that the teachers could refer to them throughout the interviews (Appendix B). For the interviews conducted digitally via Zoom, we provided the teachers with the curriculum extract via a shared screen throughout the entirety of the interview session. After each question, the teachers were given time to read the curriculum extract and the questions to minimize misunderstandings and to get the most out of the questions for the result.

The interviews typically lasted between 15-20 minutes, and we collected data by taking handwritten notes. We chose to write down the answers by hand, as both of us preferred this method and found it easier to capture responses directly. This also allowed us to note additional observations, such as body language or facial expressions, which could be relevant to the analysis but were not explicitly phrased in the answers. After completing the interviews, we reminded the teachers once again that all information shared would remain anonymous, and our notes had limited access to the persons conducting this study. The interview transcripts were securely stored on the university server, while the consent forms were retained solely by us, the authors, with no access to anyone else. All collected data were handled confidentially and deleted upon completion of the study.

After completing the interviews, the interviewer transcribed the handwritten notes into a digital document to ensure the second researcher had access to all responses. During transcription, we assigned pseudonyms to the teachers, using different names and not specifying genders. All references in the study were made using these pseudonyms. Transcribing the handwritten notes into a digital document allowed us to organize our observations, include additional comments, and clarify unclear notes. The responses were then compared and analyzed over four days, as the interviews were conducted on different days.

4.4 Analysis

We used thematic analysis to analyze the data collected from the interviews. As described by Braun and Clarke (2024), this method allows us to identify different patterns and themes between the answers, which can provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives on value-creating learning in English education.

During the interviews, we manually recorded the participants' responses in Swedish by taking handwritten notes (Braun & Clarke, 2024). This approach allowed us to add comments and observations throughout the data collection process. After completing the interviews, we transferred all responses into a digital document in Swedish to consolidate the data in one place and to ensure we could write the given answers verbatim in full sentences without altering them. Once all responses were written in Swedish into the digital document, we then translated them into English, organizing the answers into coherent sections to maintain clarity. We aimed to faithfully translate the responses without altering them too much to adapt them for our study. According to Alvehus (2023), interpretation in a qualitative study, such as this one, is crucial for achieving a general understanding of the interviews. Alvehus (2023) states that interpreting responses involves highlighting the phenomenon's significance in a collaboratively conducted study. By collaboratively translating the responses over two days, we contributed to a more general understanding of their meaning while also strengthening the reliability of the process by taking breaks in between.

When analyzing the transcripts, we coded them to identify recurring themes and patterns relevant to the study. To enhance the inter-rater reliability, we conducted an independent thematic

analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Each researcher separately coded the data to determine emerging themes. Following Braun and Clarke's (2024) approach to thematic analysis, we compared our coding results. This process allowed us to identify a broad range of recurring themes. We structured these themes to identify patterns and recurring ideas in teachers' responses. This approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both shared and unique perspectives. It ensured that all relevant themes were captured while minimizing individual researcher bias, without focusing on determining 'right' or 'wrong' themes (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Through discussion and comparison, we refined our coding and arrived at the final four themes:

1. Value-creating learning in relation to the curriculum
2. Challenges and opportunities in using value-creating learning to meet the curriculum goals
3. Engagement, motivation, and participation
4. The teacher's role and influence in English education

After identifying the final themes, we collectively connected them to our interview questions, focusing on questions 1–9 (Appendix A). We did this by analyzing how we had formulated the questions and how the teachers had responded, then refining each theme to ensure clarity and alignment with our study's purpose and objectives. This process helped us systematically categorize the data and extract meaningful insights for the study.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the teachers were informed and provided consent to participate in the study, we supplied them with a letter of consent (Appendix C) that clearly outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights. We also informed them that it is voluntary to participate and that they can withdraw their participation at any time without any consequences. There will be no voice or video recordings. To ensure and maintain anonymity and protection of information, all collected data was handled with strict confidentiality. No personal information, such as names, school affiliations, or age, was collected or mentioned to ensure that the participants could not be identified. Following the General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR, 2016/679) and ethical standards for educational research as outlined by The Swedish Research Council (2024), we implemented necessary precautions to protect participants' privacy and data; for instance, we altered all their names and used they/them pronouns.

To ensure that the teachers could respond and express their genuine perspective on the matter without feeling influenced, we designed our questions to be neutral and free from bias. To further minimize bias, we structured the interviews with open-ended questions and avoided any wording that might lead the participants to a particular response (Appendix A). We also reassured them that there were no right or wrong answers as the interview involved personal reflections on their teaching approaches, and this was important to reduce the chances that participants would give answers they thought were more acceptable rather than sharing their true opinions.

5. Findings

This section presents the findings related to the study's aim and research questions, highlighting key themes that emerged from the interviews. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. *How do Swedish lower primary school teachers interpret value-creating learning in relation to the curriculum goals in English education?*
2. *What challenges and opportunities do teachers experience when integrating value-creating learning in their English education?*
3. *How do teachers perceive the impact of value-creating learning on students' motivation, engagement, and the relevance of English in real-life contexts?*

The findings are organized into four key themes to systematically present teachers' perspectives on value-creating learning within the framework of the Swedish curriculum (Appendix B). By focusing both on the strategies teachers use and the challenges they encounter, this section provides insight into how value-creating learning is applied in the classroom and its perceived impact on students' learning experiences. The findings are presented separately from the discussion, where they will be analyzed in relation to previous research and literature. Each theme is illustrated with relevant examples, including quotes from participants, to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives.

5.1 Value-Creating Learning in Relation to the Curriculum

One of the questions asked was: To what extent do you base your planning and execution of English lessons on the goals and guidelines of the curriculum? - Do you have the curriculum nearby when planning, or is it ingrained in your mind, etc.? Five out of the seven interviewed teachers said that they used the curriculum when planning new lessons and activities. As Billie said, "I base my teaching entirely on the curriculum. Everything we need to teach is outlined in the curriculum". Not every single teacher followed it to a tee, for example, Alex and Mika based their teaching on workbooks and other materials that are made to connect to the curriculum. Alex

mentioned that they did not specifically base their teaching on the curriculum, but instead, they worked with workbooks that were based on the curriculum goals. Similarly, Mika explained, "We work with various materials that are based on the curriculum, but we don't refer to it directly. Instead, we always keep in mind that the focus is on student interaction and using student-centered materials". Although all teachers consider the curriculum in their teaching, their approaches to implementing it differ. Billie bases their teaching entirely on the curriculum, while rather than directly referencing the curriculum, Alex and Mika prefer to use materials that still adhere to its guidelines.

When answering the question, Do you use value-creating learning when planning and executing your English lessons? Can you give any examples of how or what you do? All seven teachers said that they incorporated value-creating learning in some ways, though it was not always a central focus. As Bille mentioned, "Although I don't directly base my teaching on value-creating learning, I try to work in a value-creating way by allowing students to work together. They can help each other, ask a friend, share resources, and praise one another." When working with value-creating learning, the teachers often base their lessons on the students' interests, as well as current events such as ongoing holidays or the time of the year, like the month or specific dates to make it more engaging.

Not all teachers reported working based on or following value-creating learning. For example, Alex mentioned that they did not work based on or in accordance with value-creating learning in their English lessons, saying, "Unfortunately, not in English. I wish I/we had more creativity for that, but it's difficult since I already feel insecure about the language".

When asked, Do you believe value-creating learning helps students achieve the curriculum goals in English?, six teachers emphasized that a key aspect of curriculum goals is to create opportunities for students to develop confidence in using English in various situations and for different purposes. The teachers from our study who incorporated value-creating learning based their teaching on student-centered approaches and real-world events relevant to their surroundings. Teachers expressed that this helped students understand the relevance of their learning while also preparing them to be able to use the language efficiently in the future by adapting it to different purposes, audiences, and contexts.

5.2 Challenges & Opportunities in Using Value-Creating Learning to Meet the Curriculum Goals

One of the interview questions is directly linked to the curriculum: How do you work to create value-creating contexts where students can use English to strengthen their confidence and ability to apply their knowledge? All seven interviewed teachers emphasized the importance of student-centered tasks and activities that enhance students' awareness and proficiency in English. By incorporating students' interests, the teachers aim to create relevance and help students connect their learning to the world beyond the classroom. For instance, Kim stated: "I strive to create a connection between what we do in the classroom and the world outside to strengthen my students' knowledge. It does not always work perfectly, but I try my best.". Kim described this as both an opportunity and a challenge when implementing value-creating learning to meet the curriculum goals. Similarly, Max stated that by understanding the curriculum and its goals, they can incorporate value-creating learning when designing activities for students to use English in real-life contexts.

However, several challenges emerged in the interviews. Three teachers highlighted the difficulty of deciding which student interests to incorporate into lessons, as not all students can have their preferences considered or may not even wish to share their hobbies. Another challenge, specifically mentioned by Sam, was the difficulty of finding an audience outside the classroom. "Finding an authentic audience is a major challenge" Sam stated, explaining that students often struggle both linguistically and socially when interacting with people beyond their classmates. Additionally, Alex expressed concerns about their own competence and confidence in English as a challenge when implementing value-creating learning: "If I felt stronger in the subject, it would probably be easier to be creative and quickly adapt lessons based on what students express". As a grade three teacher, Alex reflected on how value-creating learning had been more occurring in the earlier school years: "It was more common in grades 1 and 2 that we brought different situations and contexts into the classroom, connecting them to different areas and real-life scenarios". Another perspective was provided by Billie, who emphasized the importance of

teachers having the necessary skills and support to implement value-creating learning: "As a teacher, you try to make sure you have what is needed to support all students".

Despite these challenges, the interviewed teachers also highlighted several opportunities that value-creating learning can offer in meeting curriculum goals. From teachers' observations of students' perspectives, one of the major benefits is enhanced motivation and engagement in English lessons. Teachers observed that students became more confident, both in their English skills and in understanding the curriculum's goals and requirements.

A concrete opportunity, as Kim mentioned, is sharing the learning process with students, explaining where the final product will go or why their knowledge is important. Max agreed, stating that this also allows teachers to assess students' progress and better track their development, offering clearer insights into how well students are meeting the curriculum goals. Another opportunity, mentioned by four teachers, was the flexibility in how the curriculum can be interpreted. While some teachers saw this as a challenge, others viewed it as an opportunity. They explained that the ability to adapt lessons based on students' needs and interests allows them to provide more relevant and engaging learning experiences. Billie expressed this flexibility as a strength rather than a limitation: "I use the method that works best for my specific students and this particular teaching situation. A smaller class also provides better opportunities to implement what is stated in the curriculum as a positive tool rather than a requirement".

5.3 Engagement, Motivation, and Participation

The results from the interviews showed that the majority of the seven teachers emphasized that value-creating learning has a positive impact on students' engagement. Especially when the tasks and activities are related to students' interests and everyday life. Six out of seven teachers said that value-creating learning strengthened students' willingness to take part in the tasks at hand and acquire new knowledge in English. One of the teachers, Max, was torn, as some students could not reflect on their work and understand the purpose behind it, whilst others found it easier to connect their learning and understand the bigger picture.

When it comes to the question of whether value-creating learning increases motivation, five out of the seven interviewed teachers expressed that engaging learning sequences can increase

students' motivation. Teachers expressed that by incorporating students' interests and elements from their surroundings, teachers can enhance their teaching and encourage students to acquire new knowledge and actively participate in the activity. When answering this question, Alex stated, "If the students know why they are learning things and get to be a part of the process, they will become more motivated". Max expressed a similar view and pointed out that "using student-centered materials can make students more engaged and motivated to participate in the activity". Overall, the teachers indicate that value-creating learning enhances students' engagement, particularly when the learning activities and tasks are based on students' interests and experiences. Five of the teachers agree that value-creating learning has a positive effect, while the other two noted challenges related to students' ability to reflect on their learning. Engaging lessons and student-centered approaches were highlighted as key factors when fostering motivation and participation in the classroom.

5.4 The Teacher's Role and Influence in English Education

The interviewed teachers expressed varying attitudes toward teaching L2 English, ranging from positive to neutral. Three out of seven teachers found teaching English enjoyable and rewarding, highlighting a varied and engaging approach to different activities and teaching. Alex, however, stood out by expressing uncertainty regarding their English language abilities, which impacted their confidence in teaching the subject. "Teaching English is difficult for me because I am not fully confident in my own English skills" (Alex), explaining that this may affect their attitude towards English education.

A common theme among the teachers was their role in supporting students' learning and confidence in English. Teachers emphasized the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of background knowledge, feel included and capable of participating in lessons. All teachers responded that they work student-centered, incorporating students' interests and thoughts into their lesson-planning to create valuable and engaging activities. Kim explained, "Considering students' interests helps me design engaging lessons and activities". Similarly, Max highlighted the balance between structured teaching and student engagement: "It is important to

guide the learning process while incorporating students' interests to make lessons more engaging". This perspective supports the idea that student-centered activities can enhance students' confidence in using English.

However, not all teachers approach lesson planning in the same way. Alex and Mika reported relying more heavily on a workbook with an accompanying textbook. While they acknowledged that textbooks provide continuity, they also recognized limitations in building students' confidence in English. Alex noted that using textbooks was sometimes a requirement imposed by the school administration and provided an accessible way to structure lessons: "These books are an easy way to continue teaching English because students get to read, listen, speak, and work within the same book". Mika, in contrast, explained that they supplemented textbook exercises with varied activities to create structured learning sequences that gradually build students' confidence. "I integrate different steps into my lessons to ensure that students progressively gain confidence in using English" (Mika).

All seven teachers expressed efforts to incorporate real-world contexts and students' familiar experiences into English education, though some were more active in this approach than others. They emphasized the importance of making connections between the classroom and students' everyday lives, as well as broader global perspectives. Topics such as current events, school environments, international cultures, holidays, months, and dates were frequently integrated into the teachers' responses. Charlie shared an example of how students were encouraged to engage with global topics: "At the students' request, we explore the world around us, from events in other countries to our schoolyard. We then create posters for the study hall or make films and videos, and presentations that we can show parents or other classes". Kim also stated that they have worked interdisciplinary with another teacher, connecting value-creating learning in the English subject to another subject outside the classroom.

6. Discussion

This section analyzes the findings in relation to the research questions, key terms, and theoretical framework. Organized around the study's four main themes, it connects the findings to previous research, extracts from the Swedish curriculum (Appendix B), and relevant theoretical perspectives.

6.1 Bridging the Gap: Teachers' Interpretation of Value-Creating Learning and the Curriculum

The curriculum stresses that students should be able to use English in diverse contexts. However, teachers often find it challenging to create lessons that motivate students. Several teachers mentioned that students question the purpose of learning English, as they fail to see its connection to real-life situations. This highlights a gap between the curriculum's goals and students' actual learning experiences. Value-creating learning can be a solution, as it aims to make teaching meaningful through authentic tasks where students use English to solve real-world problems (Wiman, 2023).

Johansen et al. (2023) emphasize that when students work on tasks related to real-life situations, their understanding and engagement increase. This strengthens students' language skills and intrinsic motivation to use the language in real contexts, making learning more relevant to them. When students work with authentic tasks that use English in real-world contexts, they see a concrete purpose for the language, which enhances both their competence and motivation. This links to SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for motivation, and it also agrees with the results of our study.

Fenyvesi (2020) emphasizes the importance of building on students' own experiences and motivation to increase their engagement in the English subject. By analyzing these factors, we gain a deeper understanding of the role of value-creating learning in English education, including

how it relates to teachers' interpretation of the curriculum and their use of professional experience. This resonates with our study's findings regarding how teachers navigate the balance between the curriculum requirements and practical classroom implementation, emphasizing the challenges they face. Moreover, it highlights the need for clear guidelines to integrate value-creating learning into English education.

Ross (2023) argues that teachers' interpretation of the curriculum is key to creating meaningful learning. Teachers adapt their approach based on their knowledge and experience to enhance student motivation and engagement. As indicated by our findings, this can result in varied teaching approaches, with some teachers strictly adhering to the curriculum's goals while others see it as a flexible framework. This raises the question of how much freedom teachers should have to adapt their teaching.

Our study found that teachers consistently incorporated the curriculum into their lesson plans, adapting content to meet students' needs and interests. This approach aligns with the curriculum's emphasis on applying knowledge in various contexts (Skolverket, 2024a). This is consistent with Johansen et al. (2023), who stated that when teaching is relevant to students' own experiences and interests, they become more engaged and motivated to participate. However, our study revealed that teachers often lack the time or resources to create these meaningful situations, which leads them to rely more on traditional teaching methods. This challenge is particularly evident in grades 1-3, where a total of 60 hours of English education is divided across all three years (Skolverket, 2024b), limiting opportunities for communicative and interactive learning. Value-creating learning can maximize limited time by integrating real-world tasks, making lessons more engaging and efficient. By connecting language learning to authentic, purposeful activities, teachers can enhance motivation and participation even within a constrained timeframe (Wiman, 2023).

The curriculum emphasizes the creation of meaningful learning situations where students develop knowledge and values for active engagement (Skolverket, 2024a). As Ross (2023) points out, the teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge but also a creator of learning experiences. This means that teachers actively involve students in the learning process through

authentic tasks and real-world projects, which can reinforce their perception that English has real value beyond the classroom. This was evident in our study, where the teachers described using such approaches to enhance student engagement. When teaching is connected to real-life situations where students use English to solve concrete problems, it becomes more relevant, and the students become more motivated to learn. This relates to the curriculum's goal of creating meaningful learning situations where students can develop their knowledge and ability to apply it in various contexts (Skolverket, 2024a). It also reflects the findings in our study, as the teachers designed the tasks according to students' interests and current events, which showed that the students became more engaged.

Some teachers rely on workbooks and textbooks to achieve curriculum goals, but do not actively reflect on their use. This can lead to a more mechanical teaching approach, potentially reducing student motivation (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). On the other hand, some teachers interpret the curriculum's goals more freely and create more engaging lessons through authentic tasks. Teachers in our study sought to make learning more relevant by incorporating real-world tasks and student-centered activities. Research suggests that such approaches not only enhance motivation but also deepen students' understanding and retention of knowledge (Johansen et al., 2023; Odari, 2020). Some teachers design lessons where students use English in projects to solve real-world problems. This illustrates how a flexible interpretation of the curriculum can make learning more meaningful, though it requires additional time and resources (Ross, 2023).

Ross (2023) emphasizes that teachers' interpretation of the curriculum is an active process in which they use their experience and expertise to make the curriculum's goals relevant and meaningful for students. The variation in teachers' approaches to the curriculum reflects this. Some see it as a flexible guideline, while others interpret it more strictly. This variation affects how meaningful and engaging the teaching becomes for students. Balancing structure and creativity requires providing teachers with support and resources to implement value-creating learning efficiently without making it too time-consuming or difficult to assess.

6.2 Navigating Curriculum Flexibility: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Value-Creating Learning

Our study's findings indicate that teachers' use of value-creating learning to meet curriculum goals presents both opportunities and challenges. Some teachers perceive it as beneficial yet demanding, as it requires bridging classroom learning with real-world applications. The findings suggest that teachers who actively engage in adapting the curriculum tend to experience greater professional growth and confidence in their teaching. The interviewed teachers who actively shape the curriculum tend to integrate value-creating learning more effectively. They use its flexibility to design lessons that connect to student interests and curriculum goals (Ross, 2023). However, those who struggle with curriculum interpretation view this flexibility as an additional challenge rather than an opportunity for innovation. A key challenge was the perception that value-creating learning requires additional time and effort in lesson planning. Some teachers expressed difficulty in selecting which student interests to integrate into lessons, while others specifically highlighted the challenge of finding an authentic audience beyond the classroom. Another challenge concerns the constraints of time, assessment demands, and curriculum adaptation. Several teachers reported feeling pressured to prioritize efficiency over creativity, leading them to rely on structured, predictable lesson plans rather than integrating value-creating learning. This suggests that the perceived rigidity of assessment criteria may limit teachers' willingness to experiment with value-creating approaches, even when these relate to the curriculum goals (Wiman, 2023).

In contrast, our findings also indicate that teachers who feel constrained by time pressures or assessment demands may struggle to incorporate value-creating learning effectively. Such constraints can limit teachers' ability to adapt the curriculum in ways that foster creativity and innovation (Ross, 2023). One teacher emphasized that while flexibility in curriculum interpretation can be a strength, it also requires the right conditions, such as smaller class sizes, to be effectively implemented. This is supported by Wiman (2023), who argues that teachers' ability to integrate student-centered learning is often constrained by external factors such as time

limitations and institutional expectations. Our findings suggest that without sufficient time and support, teachers may struggle to balance the demands of the curriculum to foster student engagement through value-creating learning. However, as one teacher stated, if you do not start to think of value-creation in your lessons, it will be more difficult to incorporate the students' interests. Many researchers argue that incorporating students' interests into L2 education will foster deeper engagement and motivation (Johansen et al., 2023; Pinter, 2017; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012; Vassiloudis & Chalda, 2024).

This variation in teachers' approaches further emphasizes the crucial role of a teacher's engagement with the curriculum, as well as the importance of balancing professional autonomy with the practical demands of teaching (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As Ryan and Deci (2017) highlight, increased confidence in subject knowledge and autonomy in teaching can enhance teachers' engagement in creating innovative learning experiences. Lackeús (2022) describes this as designing value-creating experiences that foster both student motivation and a deeper understanding of curriculum content. Similarly, our study indicates that teachers who feel uncertain about their subject knowledge are more likely to rely on traditional teaching methods rather than incorporating value-creating strategies. One teacher described it as both a challenge and an opportunity when creating connections between the classroom and the outside world based on the curriculum.

Another teacher highlighted that understanding the curriculum plays a crucial role in incorporating value-creating learning into lesson design. This connects with Wiman (2023), who suggests that teachers who view the curriculum as a foundation for innovation rather than restriction are more likely to create meaningful learning experiences. However, our findings also indicate that not all teachers feel equally confident in making these connections. This is consistent with SDT's emphasis on maintaining a balance between autonomy, competence, and relatedness in educational settings (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Furthermore, our findings suggest that a lack of confidence in subject knowledge may further hinder teachers' willingness to adapt lessons creatively. One participant noted that feeling more competent in English would make it easier to be creative and flexible in lesson design. This supports Ross's (2023) claim that subject knowledge influences how teachers interpret and implement the curriculum. This relates to

Odari's (2020) study, which states that teachers' willingness to implement value-creating education is combined with teachers' subject knowledge.

The findings also highlight specific barriers teachers face when implementing value-creating learning through the curriculum requirements. One recurring challenge is the difficulty of providing students with an authentic audience for their work. Some teachers noted that students often struggle both linguistically and socially when interacting with people beyond their classmates, making real-world connections more difficult. This suggests that teachers may place significant emphasis on spoken English, which relates to the curriculum goals for grades 1–3 (Skolverket, 2024a). However, this may limit broader interpretations of value-creating learning. Our findings suggest that providing students with an authentic audience through value-creating learning enhances engagement.

This reflects the findings of Johansen et al. (2023) and Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024), who found that real-world relevance significantly impacts student motivation and learning outcomes. Wiman (2023) argues that teachers who struggle with curriculum interpretation often avoid using methods that require significant adaptation. For example, a teacher who feels uncertain about how digital tools can be used in language instruction may choose to exclude projects involving video editing or social media, despite the potential for these methods to enhance student engagement and motivation. The teachers' difficulty in identifying alternative value-creating tasks beyond verbal communication reflects a narrower understanding of the curriculum's potential applications. Ross (2023) argues that teachers' subject knowledge plays a critical role in how they interpret and implement the curriculum in their teaching. This suggests that interviewed teachers' uncertainty may stem not only from practical constraints but also from their confidence in navigating curriculum requirements in a subject. Teachers' varied approaches to curriculum interpretation reflect findings by Ross (2023) and Wiman (2023), who suggest that confidence in subject knowledge plays a crucial role in how flexible teachers feel in adapting their instruction to include value-creating learning. The findings are consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2017) argument that autonomy and competence are key in fostering both teacher and student motivation. Teachers who feel more confident in curriculum adaptation may also create

more engaging and relevant learning experiences for students, as seen in the research by Saeed and Zyngier (2012) on intrinsic motivation and engagement.

It emerged through the interviews that not all students feel comfortable working with others, especially in a competitive classroom environment. The teachers noted that some students viewed collaboration as cheating in their learning process, rather than a learning support. This highlights a tension between fostering interaction and ensuring that all students feel secure in their learning process, suggesting that teachers must carefully balance group work with individual learning approaches (Pinter, 2017). Furthermore, Fenyvesi (2020) suggests that student motivation varies over time, indicating that teaching strategies like value-creating learning may need to be adjusted accordingly. One interviewed teacher offered a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of involving students in discussions about their learning processes. By explaining where the students' final product will be applied or why their knowledge is relevant, teachers help students recognize the value of their learning through collaboration. Involving students in the learning process may encourage them to rethink their view of collaboration, shifting from seeing it as cheating to recognizing it as a valuable tool for achieving lesson and curriculum goals. This approach not only strengthens students' commitment to the learning process but also reassures teachers that students are on track to achieve curriculum requirements (Wiman, 2023). However, while some interviewed teachers advocated for a student-driven approach, others relied more on structured activities to meet the curriculum goals. This contrast suggests that different teaching strategies may be necessary depending on the classroom context and the individual needs of students. As Fenyvesi (2020) also confirms, students' needs vary, and it will take different amounts of time to adjust to a teaching strategy.

Collaboration between teachers is another opportunity that emerged from the study, particularly by implementing value-creating learning. One teacher described working with a physical education colleague to create an interdisciplinary project where students applied their English skills in a sports setting, making language learning more authentic and relevant. This highlights how interdisciplinary approaches can enhance value-creating learning by connecting classroom knowledge to real-world contexts (Wiman, 2023). By fostering collaboration between subjects,

teachers can provide students with richer learning contexts, thereby increasing motivation and engagement in English education through value-creation (Lackéus, 2022). However, as indicated by our findings, collaboration is not always feasible due to differences in teaching philosophies or reluctance from colleagues. This suggests that while interdisciplinary methods can be beneficial and a positive value-creating approach, they require institutional support and teacher willingness to explore alternative pedagogical strategies. Fenyvesi (2020) found that interdisciplinary value-creating learning not only sustains students' motivation over time but also requires teachers to continuously adapt to students' evolving interests and needs. This adaptation is also seen as an opportunity to improve the teacher's curriculum knowledge for their classroom (Ross, 2023).

An aspect that emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity to meet curriculum goals through value-creating learning was the flexibility of the curriculum itself. While some teachers found this flexibility overwhelming, others saw it as an advantage that allowed them to tailor lessons to students' needs. One participant viewed this adaptability as a strength rather than a limitation, stating that it enabled them to use the most effective methods for their specific students. This aligns with Ryan and Deci (2017), who argue that autonomy in lesson design enhances teachers' ability to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Ross (2023) highlights that teachers' interpretation of the curriculum is shaped by their subject knowledge and experiences. While some teachers use this flexibility to adapt lessons to meet student needs, others face challenges in balancing curriculum content with time constraints and assessment requirements. Given that some teachers expressed uncertainty about the English subject, Ross's (2023) findings suggest that such uncertainty may influence how they navigate the curriculum's flexibility. This could explain why some teachers feel confident in their curriculum knowledge and integrate value-creating learning more effectively, while others who express uncertainty find it more difficult to relate their English education to curriculum goals.

6.3 Enhancing Motivation and Engagement in English Education through Value-Creating Learning

The teachers we interviewed described the students' motivation in English as varying, with some being engaged while others were less interested in participating. Motivation will increase when students see a clear connection between the content and their experiences, a basic principle in value-creating learning (Wiman,2023). Several studies (Johansen et al., 2023; Odari, 2020) show that tasks connected to students' own lives and interests enhance their engagement and motivation. In our study, teachers reported using current events like Christmas and Halloween to make teaching more relevant, resulting in increased participation.

Some students still do not fully engage in the lessons, even when their interests are included in the activities. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) and Fenyvesi (2020) emphasize that intrinsic motivation and task relevance are crucial for engagement, as students with higher motivation are more likely to engage in authentic tasks. However, monotonous tasks and a lack of self-confidence, particularly in language skills, can hinder participation and cause disengagement. One explanation for this could be that it is not only the tasks that influence motivation but also the students' sense of competence and confidence (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT highlights that motivation also depends on the feeling of control and the perception that tasks are not too difficult (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This may explain why students who lack confidence in their linguistic abilities might still feel excluded, even when the tasks are designed to match their interests.

Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024) show that project-based learning, where students explore a topic they find interesting in various ways over a longer period, can enhance their understanding and motivation. Our study emphasizes that this method has been particularly effective in fostering engagement and motivation in the classroom. Allowing students to explore the same theme over multiple lessons from different perspectives can enhance both motivation and understanding (Pinter, 2017).

An interesting point to note from our study is that while task variation is a key factor for success for many students, some remain disengaged despite the presence of variation. Disengaged students may face underlying issues like language barriers or low self-esteem, which affect their perception of assignments, even when they are varied and relevant (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012; Fenyvesi, 2020). Saeed and Zyngier (2012) and Fenyvesi (2020) highlight that task variation alone is not enough, as students also need to feel confident and safe in the classroom. These factors, including a sense of competence and security, are essential for full participation and engagement.

Additionally, teachers' insecurities in the English subject can limit their creativity, resulting in a more textbook-driven approach that reduces engagement. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) and Fenyvesi (2020) suggest that variation in tasks and relevance to students are important for their engagement. However, some students still show less engagement despite these factors. While task variation and relevance are crucial, other influences, such as age, developmental stages, cultural differences, and social factors like peer relationships or feelings of belonging, also play a role in engagement. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) and Fenyvesi (2020) emphasize that task variation and student interest are key, but social and cultural elements further demonstrate that student engagement is shaped by more than just task relevance.

Our study shows that when students see the real-world application of their knowledge, engagement increases, aligning with Johansen et al. (2023), who also highlight the importance of linking teaching to students' experiences. However, a challenge for teachers is ensuring that all tasks and activities are meaningful for every student. Another crucial aspect is the learning environment, as our findings highlighted a safe and inclusive classroom where students feel comfortable participating. This is supported by Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024), who argue that such an environment encourages students to take risks in their learning. Furthermore, our study found that teachers actively use varied teaching methods to maintain engagement. Yet, some still have a hard time finding a balance between structure and flexibility. Saeed and Zyngier (2012)

confirm that diverse teaching methods enhance engagement by making learning both meaningful and relevant.

Our study highlights that connecting teaching to students' interests and experiences is key to creating a sense of meaning and relevance. Similarly, Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024) found that students who can choose and explore topics of personal interest show higher levels of engagement. Fenyvesi (2020) conducted a similar study with the same results. These findings relate to what the teachers in our study expressed, reinforcing the importance of making learning personally relevant to increase motivation and engagement in English.

Engaging all students in every lesson is a challenge in education. Fenyvesi (2020) highlights that task variation and connection to students' interests are crucial for maintaining engagement and motivation. Value creation can serve as a means to increase participation by making learning more meaningful (Wiman, 2023). However, engagement is influenced by multiple factors beyond task design. Vassiloudis and Chalda (2024) emphasize that a lack of interest, insecurity in the classroom environment, or a language barrier, such as feeling uncertain about pronunciation or vocabulary, can hinder their participation. These findings are reflected in our study, where teachers describe similar challenges when striving to involve all students.

According to the findings of our study, value-creating learning leads to higher motivation and increased effort from students. Motivated students use English more frequently, both in and outside the classroom, which will improve their language skills (Vassiloudis & Chalda, 2024). Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasize that increased motivation creates a positive spiral in which students' self-confidence and engagement grow. It is clear that value-creating learning has great potential to increase students' motivation, but to maximize this, it is also important to be aware of students' differences and create an inclusive and secure learning environment. This can help students feel more comfortable and willing to participate in the lessons.

6.4 The Teacher's Role and Influence in Shaping Value-Creating English Education

In the context of English education, teachers' attitudes and self-perception of their language proficiency play a crucial role in shaping their approach to value-creating learning. Our study highlights that a teacher's confidence in their English skills influences their ability to create engaging, student-centered lesson learning. This observation aligns with Pinter (2017), who underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation for both students and teachers in language learning. Without confidence in their English abilities, teachers may struggle to motivate students and implement communicative, value-driven strategies. Similarly, Wiman (2023) emphasizes that teachers' self-confidence directly impacts their pedagogical choices, particularly in language teaching. When teachers feel insecure about their proficiency, they may be less likely to experiment with student-centered or communicative methods, potentially limiting opportunities for value-creating learning (Wiman, 2023).

A key finding from our study is that teachers who expressed insecurity about their English skills tended to rely more on structured, teacher-centered approaches rather than innovative or communicative methods. This pattern reflects Pinter's (2017) assertion that teachers with low language confidence often default to textbooks and other predictable resources. For example, one teacher mentioned that diverging from the textbook felt risky as it required a higher level of language proficiency. Such insecurities can limit opportunities for students to engage in more autonomous, creative learning experiences, which are essential for fostering motivation and developing language proficiency (Pinter, 2017). Ross (2023) emphasizes that teachers often make adjustments based on their own confidence and available resources. This suggests that a lack of confidence in English proficiency may not only affect individual teaching choices but also shape broader curricular decisions.

While structured approaches like textbook-based teaching can provide clarity, they can also restrict student engagement. Our findings suggest that although textbooks offer consistency, they may not fully support students' development of autonomy, a key component of SDT (Ryan &

Deci, 2017). Over-reliance on these resources can stifle opportunities for interactive, student-driven activities. This issue is exemplified in our study, where some teachers admitted that their reliance on textbooks was driven by their own lack of confidence rather than pedagogical preference. However, others reported that diversifying lesson plans and incorporating more interactive methods helped foster greater student engagement and motivation. Research by Saeed and Zyngier (2012) further supports this, demonstrating that students who experience intrinsic motivation are more authentically engaged in learning. In contrast, those motivated by external rewards, such as grades, show more superficial engagement. This highlights the importance of ensuring that English lessons include meaningful, engaging activities that foster intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, our study reveals that teachers who adopt student-centered approaches, such as value-creative learning, not only engage students more effectively but also emphasize the importance of creating meaningful connections to students' interests. This practice aligns with SDT's emphasis on autonomy and competence as drivers of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Teachers who engage students by considering their interests are more successful in creating a learning environment where students feel motivated and capable. One teacher, for instance, emphasized that making lessons relevant to students' lives significantly increased their engagement. While other teachers noted the need to balance structured content with opportunities for students to engage actively with the material. Johansen et al. (2023) provide additional support for this, as their study found that students who engaged with real-life scenarios in learning retained knowledge better and demonstrated deeper understanding compared to those who worked with abstract tasks. This suggests that value-creating learning approaches, that incorporate real-world contexts, can be more effective in fostering both engagement and long-term retention of knowledge.

Despite the advantages of student-centered approaches, our study also highlights the need for balance. Some students, particularly those with lower language proficiency, may struggle with too much autonomy, potentially leading to confusion or disengagement (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). Therefore, while fostering student autonomy is essential, it must be carefully scaffolded to

avoid overwhelming learners. This balanced approach is consistent with the SDT framework, which suggests that motivation thrives when students are given both the freedom to engage and the necessary support to succeed (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In our study, the teachers who successfully integrated value-creating learning not only focused on students' interests but also incorporated real-world contexts into their lessons. This approach fosters intrinsic motivation by making learning more meaningful, and from this, the students can better relate their education to their own lives and experiences (Odari, 2020). For example, one teacher encouraged students to create short films narrating their daily routines in English, which were then shared with parents and younger students. Such authentic learning experiences boost students' confidence and highlight the importance of using English in real-world contexts, as emphasized by Pinter (2017) and stated in the curriculum (Skolverket, 2024a). This practical application of language helps both students' and teachers' motivation in English education.

Moreover, creating a supportive classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities plays a significant role in promoting student motivation. Our findings suggest that teachers who foster an open, non-judgmental atmosphere help students feel more comfortable using English. This approach is consistent with SDT's view that a secure environment enhances students' sense of competence, which in turn supports intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). One teacher in our study specifically mentioned the importance of creating an environment where mistakes were normalized, allowing students to feel safe and motivated to take risks in their English learning. Wiman (2023) similarly emphasizes that teachers who create a safe learning environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes contribute to a more positive attitude toward language learning and value-creating learning.

Ultimately, our findings suggest that for value-creating learning to be successfully implemented in English education, teachers need to feel confident in their language skills. This confidence influences their ability to create engaging, student-centered classrooms that foster autonomy, competence, and motivation (Pinter, 2017). While textbooks and structured methods have their place, our findings highlight that teachers must balance these resources with more flexible, communicative approaches to provide students with meaningful, engaging learning experiences.

In doing so, teachers can create a learning environment that nurtures both language development and intrinsic motivation, ensuring that students are not only proficient in English but also confident in their ability to use it in real-world contexts (Pinter, 2017; Wiman, 2023).

6.5 Key Insights from the Discussion

The findings indicate that clearer guidance and support from the curriculum may help teachers implement value-creating learning to strengthen students' language development. In the interviews, the teachers had the opportunity to add their thoughts and reflect on value-creating learning in English education related to the curriculum (Appendix B). Through their reflections, we were able to compile our four given themes to strengthen the teachers' approach to the aim. There is a demand for more concrete tools and resources to facilitate the implementation of value-creating learning. This was expressed as a common demand to help teachers confidently implement value-creating learning to enhance students' motivation and engagement.

7. Conclusion

Our study aimed to explore how lower primary school teachers (1-3) interpret and implement value-creating learning in their English education in accordance with the Swedish curriculum, and how it influences student motivation and engagement.

We examined teachers' challenges and opportunities in implementing this approach, such as time constraints, curriculum interpretation, and confidence in their subject knowledge. Our findings indicate that teachers who feel more confident in their English skills and their understanding of the curriculum are more likely to effectively integrate value-creating learning into their classroom. Teachers recognized the positive impact of this approach on student engagement and motivation, as it provides authentic, meaningful tasks that connect classroom learning to real-world contexts. Our study builds on the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which suggests that students' intrinsic motivation is enhanced when their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is met. This is relevant to value-creating learning, as it provides students with authentic, meaningful tasks that allow them to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, fostering both engagement and motivation (Wiman, 2023).

However, some inconsistencies emerged in teachers' responses regarding the challenges and opportunities of value-creating learning. Some teachers focused on their own role in the process, while others emphasized the students' experiences and understanding. These differing perspectives are likely influenced by varying levels of teacher experience with value-creating learning, their individual school contexts, and access to resources. This divergence in responses was not a result of our interview method but reflects the broad scope of the concept itself. Additionally, value-creating learning is still relatively new for many teachers, which may have contributed to the inconsistency of teachers' responses. In hindsight, narrowing the scope of our study to focus on a more specific strategy of value-creating learning, such as real-world applications, might have provided clearer insights.

The study's limitations include these differing responses, which complicated the interpretation of some findings. The wide range of interpretations could be addressed by refining the focus of future studies on a particular strategy of value-creating learning. Furthermore, exploring how teacher training programs could better equip educators with the skills and confidence needed to balance curriculum requirements with student-centered approaches would be valuable for future research.

In conclusion, our study underscores the importance of institutional support, professional development, and teacher collaboration as key factors in bridging the gap and overcoming barriers to successfully implementing value-creating learning. Our findings highlight the need for further research into how teachers' confidence, professional development, and curriculum clarity can support the effective integration of value-creating learning. By focusing on these aspects, future studies can contribute to the development of more engaging and effective English education for students.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Introductory questions:

1. What teacher degree have you completed, and do you have any specific focus on English?
2. Have you always taught in lower grades, or have you taught other grades as well?
3. How long have you been teaching English?
4. How would you describe your attitude towards teaching English?

Questions:

1. To what extent do you base your planning and execution of English lessons on the goals and guidelines of the curriculum? - Do you have the curriculum nearby when planning, or is it ingrained in your mind, etc.?
2. Do you use value-creating learning when planning and executing your English lessons? Can you give any examples of how or what you do?
3. Do you believe that value-creating learning helps students achieve the curriculum goals in English?
4. How do you work to create value-creating contexts where students can use English in a way that strengthens their confidence and ability to apply their knowledge in various situations and contexts?
5. What challenges and opportunities do you experience in your work when integrating value-creating learning into your English teaching?
6. How do you think value-creating learning affects students' learning experiences and their engagement in English? - If they mention using value-creating learning, this can be explored further.
7. Do you feel that value-creating learning affects students' motivation to participate in lessons?
8. How do you create teaching situations where students can use English in everyday and familiar contexts?
9. Is there anything you would like to add or reflect on regarding value-creating learning and motivation in English teaching related to the curriculum?

Appendix B: Curriculum Extracts

Läroplanen 2022:

Under aim:

The teaching shall give pupils the opportunity to develop plurilingualism and confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for a variety of purposes.

(Undervisningen ska ge eleverna förutsättningar att utveckla sin flerspråkighet samt tilltro till sin förmåga att använda språket i olika situationer och för skilda syften.)

When engaging with spoken language and texts, pupils shall be given the opportunity to develop the ability to relate the content to their own experiences, life circumstances, and interests. *(I mötet med talat språk och texter ska eleverna ges möjlighet att utveckla förmågan att sätta innehållet i relation till egna erfarenheter, livsvillkor och intressen.)*

English teaching shall provide pupils with the prerequisites for developing: the ability to adapt the language to different purposes, listeners or readers, and contexts... (Undervisningen i ämnet engelska ska ge eleverna förutsättningar att utveckla: förmåga att anpassa språket efter olika syften, mottagare och sammanhang...)

Under core content:

Communication content

Subject areas that are familiar to the pupils. *(Ämnesområden som är välbekanta för eleverna)*

Everyday situations, interests, people and places. *(Vardagliga situationer, intressen, personer och platser)*

Everyday life and ways of living in different contexts and areas in which English is used. *(Vardagsliv och levnadssätt i olika sammanhang och områden där engelska används)*

Listening and reading – reception

Words and phrases in the local environment, such as on signs, in advertisements and other simple texts. *(Ord och fraser i närmiljön, till exempel på skyltar, i reklam och andra enkla texter.)*

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Samtycke till medverkan i intervju

Vi, Johanna Grandin och Olivia Kronvall, är studenter vid lärarutbildningen på Malmö universitet och genomför vårt examensarbete. Vårt examensarbete syftar till att undersöka hur vanliga strategier inom värdeskapande lärande påverkar elevers motivation i engelskundervisningen. För att få en djupare förståelse av undervisningen kommer vi att genomföra intervjuer med lärare.

Syftet med intervjun:

Syftet med intervjun är att få en djupare förståelse för hur lärare arbetar med värdeskapande lärande i engelskundervisningen för att uppfylla läroplanens mål (LGR 22). Vi vill undersöka hur denna undervisningsmetod kan påverka elevers motivation och engagemang i ämnet, samt vilka möjligheter och utmaningar lärare upplever i sin praktik.

Metod:

Intervjun kommer att genomföras muntligt och vi kommer att anteckna lärarens svar. Det kommer inte att tas några ljud- eller bildinspelningar. Intervjun beräknas ta cirka 10-15 minuter.

Dokumentation:

All information från intervjun kommer att dokumenteras genom anteckningar. Vi kommer att lagra alla anteckningar på ett säkert sätt och ingen personligt identifierbar information (som namn eller kontaktuppgifter) kommer att publiceras.

Lagring och förvaring av material:

Alla insamlade uppgifter kommer att lagras på Malmö universitets server under arbetet med examensarbetet och kommer att förstöras när studien är examinerad. Samtyckesblanketterna förvaras oåtkomligt på Malmö universitet.

Forskningsetiska principer:

Vårt projekt följer Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer (God forskningssed 2017).

Dessa principer innebär att:

- Medverkan baseras på samtycke och detta samtycke kan när som helst återkallas. Alla som tillfrågas har rätt att tacka nej till att delta, eller att avbryta sin medverkan när som helst, utan negativa konsekvenser.
- Deltagarna kommer att avidentifieras i det färdiga arbetet.
- Materialet kommer enbart att användas för denna studie och kommer att förstöras när examensarbetet är examinerat.

För mer information om forskningsetiska principer, vänligen hänvisa till Vetenskapsrådets riktlinjer.

Namn på deltagare: _____

Datum: _____

Underskrift: _____

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