Dissertation submitted in part-fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION by Advanced Study in Education (Special Field: Language Teaching - TEFL)

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A STUDY OF CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS MADE IN CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING

March 1998

University of Exeter
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1995-96

I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified, and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me.

(Signed) ....................

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I gratefully acknowledge the counsel and guidance offered by my supervisor, Marion Williams, throughout the preparation of this dissertation.

I am most grateful to Janet Charles for her help during the piloting, to Joanna Inward and Corinne Page for their assistance in carrying out the questionnaires, my wife, Audrey Ireland for her patience and help with the transcribing, to Suzana Haji Sharbini for preparing the final interview transcripts and to Dr. Peter Preece for his help in interpreting the data.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation represents an attempt to gain an insight into the attributions made by language learners.

The subjects of the study are 281 lower secondary language learners of average age 13.25 years from 2 schools in South London.

Following a review of the current literature on attribution theory and classroom learning, a language learning attributions questionnaire was devised and administered to all the subjects. In addition, a language learning attributions interview was administered to 16 of the subjects.

The results gained from the study are consistent with much of the previous research carried out in educational settings. The evidence from the questionnaires and interviews suggests that most of the subjects make attributions that are likely to lead to motivated behaviour in the future. In addition, there is evidence of self-serving bias and that attributions can be dichotomous.

The analysis of the questionnaire data suggests that there are significant differences in some attributions made by learners for unsuccessful outcomes when controlled for learning situation, school, ability band and teaching group. This supports the view that attributions may be situation specific.

The data shows no significant differences when analysed for gender. In addition there is little evidence of significant differences for attributions made by learners for successful outcomes when controlled for learning situation, school or ability band.

Finally, suggestions for future research are made.
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Rationale

My interest in classroom motivation grew out of my work as a language teacher. This interest first came to the forefront when I was working in Spain. I had always accepted that 'you can't please all of the people all of the time but you can please some of the people some of the time'. I was of the view that as long as most of the learners appeared to be motivated and I kept the school psychologist abreast of any problems then I was doing my job. However, after a change of schools and circumstances I began to think more carefully about what was actually involved in classroom motivation and about my beliefs concerning motivation in general.

I was working at a private school just outside Madrid which was popular partly due to the fact that the learners received two hours of tuition in English each day from native English teachers. I was teaching in 'Ciclo Superior' which equates to lower secondary in British schools and consists of grades 6, 7 and 8, that is 11-12 years, 12-13 years and 13-14 years.

In each year the classes were arranged into mixed ability groups for all lessons except for foreign language lessons where the learners were grouped according to 'language competence' which was determined by their annual assessment grades. I taught one group in each of these three grades. In grade 6 I was responsible for the top class where the learners were generally well motivated to learn. Some had an English speaking parent, others had previously lived in English speaking countries, and a number had previously attended a primary
school where an English immersion method had been employed. The grade 7 class was a middle band group in which once again motivation to learn was rarely a problem. In both the grade 6 and grade 7 classes which I taught, motivation problems could generally be identified as problems that the learners exhibited in other subjects. These problems were often caused by personal difficulties that were unlikely to be solved in the language classroom.

In contrast, the grade 8 class was the lowest achieving group. The fact that students in this class were the 'bottom' group immediately stigmatized them as 'no hopers' amongst their peers. The reasons for the learners being placed in this group were various but the principal criterion was the level that they had attained in English assessments during the previous year.

While teaching I started to think about the differences between the learners in these classes, especially the differences between those in different groups. I spent a great deal of time experimenting with ways of motivating the learners in the grade 8 class. The success of my attempts were varied but gave a practical insight into classroom motivation. The experience of teaching this grade 8 class helped to develop my interest in classroom motivation, which provided an important area of interest during the following year when I was studying at the University of Exeter.

There are a number of theories of classroom motivation which have been well researched and which have influenced many of the changes that have taken place in educational settings over the past twenty years. One such theory is attribution theory, which appears to have received a great deal of attention as potentially having a role to play in designing a general theory of classroom motivation. However, it does not seem to have generated the depth of research in educational settings that some other areas of motivational research, for example the extrinsic/intrinsic motivational dichotomy, goal orientation and learner autonomy have generated.
Through my interest in classroom motivation I have read a great deal about motivation in the general and language classroom. As a result, I am interested to find out more about the potential role of attributions in learning and specifically in language learning. Perceived Causal Attributions, what individuals believe to be the determinants of outcomes and events, have been suggested as determinants of motivation. As a result, attribution theory has developed over a period of almost 40 years, into a central area of research into motivation. However, research into attributions has been varied and investigations into other applications, such as, clinical psychology (Weiner, 1986) and sports psychology (Biddle, in press) appear to be more widespread than those in educational psychology. Of the studies of attributions in educational settings there appears to be just one in the area of language learning: Gardner and Tremblay (1995). It is my intention to investigate attributions made by students in language learning and thus gain a greater insight into the potential role of attribution theory in language learning motivation. I shall now outline the general aims of this study.

1.2 General aims of the study

In this dissertation I shall attempt to explore the role played by perceived causal attributions made by learners at secondary school in determining their motivation to learn foreign languages. Specifically, I shall investigate attributions given by 12 to 13 year old children from two English secondary schools through a combination of questionnaires and interviews. The specific objectives of this study can be found at the beginning of chapter 4.
1.3 Overview of the Chapters

In this general introduction (Chapter 1) I outline the rationale and aims that underlie this study. In Chapter 2 I shall describe the background to the study. I shall outline the role of modern languages in the English National Curriculum.

In Chapter 3 I shall present a review and discussion of the literature relevant to the study. I shall discuss research into attributions and the development of this research. I shall begin by explaining the background to motivation in classroom second and foreign language learning and discuss the contributions of writers, in the field of language learning, who have suggested attribution theory as an area of investigation. Next, I shall review how researchers have investigated attribution theory as a potential component of motivation and discuss some of the issues raised by this research. Finally, I shall review research which has taken place in educational settings; detailing some of the findings which may provide an indication as to the direction the current investigation should take.

In chapter 4 I shall begin by detailing the specific objectives of this study. I shall then discuss the model I have used for this analysis. The history of attribution research is varied and much attention has been paid to research methodology. I shall therefore explain why the methods used in this dissertation have been employed and explain how it evolved, developed and was implemented.

In chapter 5 I shall present the results of this study. I shall analysis the data and discuss the findings. Finally, in chapter 6 I shall make tentative suggestions as to how research into attributions made in foreign language classrooms might contribute to a model of language learning motivation and suggest directions that future research in attributions made by young language learners might take.
Chapter Two

Background to the Study

In this chapter I shall provide a background to the current study by discussing the development of modern foreign language education in English schools.

2.1 Modern languages in English schools

The English education system has undergone many changes over the past forty years; not least in the area of modern foreign languages. Philips (1988:6) explains that learning languages in the 1950s was mostly confined to the privileged few who attended grammar or independent schools. The study of a foreign language was considered to be

good training and contributed to the basic intellectual equipment of the educated classes (Philips, 1988:6).
2.1.1 Modern Languages in the 1960s and 1970s

The widespread introduction of comprehensive education in the 1960s led to an expansion of language teaching with schools being in the position of having to teach a foreign language (usually French) across almost the whole range of abilities. However, with the extensive use of teaching methods founded on behaviourist theories and a concentration on accuracy, many of the students who started learning a foreign language opted out at the earliest opportunity. Added to this there was a high incidence of failure in foreign language examinations (Philips, 1988).

Modern Languages had been introduced in many primary schools in the 1960s as part of the Primary School Language Project. It is estimated that 35% of all junior schools were involved in the 'French From Eight' pilot scheme (Lawton, 1996). This progress was not maintained into the 1970s.

With the recommendation that there should be no further expansion of French teaching in primary schools, Primary French in the Balance (Burstall et al., 1974) had a far reaching effect on policy for language teaching. Whether or not its conclusions were justified (and it had strong critics, among them Buckby (1976) and the Nuffield Foundation (1977)) the Report ensured that French would be started at the age of 11 in the case of most pupils (Phillips, 1988:14).
This concern over the teaching of modern languages below the age of 11 continues to the present day where it has not been included as part of the National Curriculum at primary level. However, in a survey of 55 LEAs in England and Wales by Lawton (1996), it was estimated that in 1993 almost 22% of primary schools included modern languages on their curriculum.

In the 1970s, with the difficulties experienced in the 1960s continuing, concern was reflected in reports such as a 1977 HMI report 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' which was highly critical of the state of modern language education. Indeed, Brumfit (1995:128) when discussing language learners in the 1970s and 1980s asks

How often have we heard people claim not to be able to speak languages 'after having received an English education', or passing O-level but not being able to speak a word of the foreign tongue (Brumfit, 1995:128)

In addition to this the United Kingdom had become a member of the EEC in 1971 and as a result the profile of French as a useful tool for communication rather than an academic discipline was raised. This countered, to some degree, the traditional reticence in learning languages shown by learners.
2.1.2 Modern Languages in the 1980s and 1990s

In the 1980s the GCSE exam was introduced which lead to a change in the language syllabus

GCSE allots the highest possible prominence to the cultural appropriateness and authenticity of its teaching and testing materials. Pupil-as-tourist or host are key concepts, as is comprehensibility to a 'sympathetic native speaker' (Brumfit, 1995:128-9).

Brumfit (1995:129) continues by observing that the introduction of the GCSE "has shaped the teaching and learning of foreign languages across the entire age range". However, the most significant change was instigated in 1988 with the creation of the National Curriculum Council (NCC). This body was created by the 1988 Education Act to pave the way for the introduction of a National Curriculum. In subject areas the NCC established working groups with the Modern Languages group being set up in 1989. In the ensuing period a series of guidelines and reports were published which shaped the position of modern languages in the National Curriculum.
Specifically, the National Curriculum, which has now been introduced, requires all children in Key Stages 3 and 4, the secondary school level, to study a modern language. Indeed, the Languages for All policy of the National Curriculum compels all children to continue studying at least one modern language until they finish compulsory education (Brumfit, 1995:127). As mentioned above, although primary schools do not have to offer a modern language many do.

Brumfit (1995:127) notes that the first year in which the National Curriculum was introduced: 1992, was also the first year of the 'European single market' which has heightened awareness among the population of the importance of learning a European language in order to secure employment in the future.

Mellor and Trafford (1994), in a survey of the implementation of the 'National Curriculum in Modern Foreign Languages', found there to be an increase in the use of the target language in the classroom. This may not only be a reflection of the National Curriculum but also reflect a continued progression towards the use of more communicative methodology, which the National Curriculum has embraced. The introduction of project work and course work and the publication of material which encourage learner autonomy are designed to encourage learners to learn languages through involving them in their learning. However, Brumfit (1995:133) expresses concern over the amount of time given over to the learning of modern languages in the National Curriculum for the process of language acquisition to happen.

Further concerns with the current state of modern language learning in England and Wales include the fact that

for many pupils languages remain the least favoured of their school studies (Brumfit, 1995:132).

Furthermore, worries exist over the fact that French predominates as
the language learned by the majority.

If 'Languages for All' is not, in practice, to become 'French for All', the need for diversification of the first foreign language has never been more urgent (Brumfit, 1995:150).

2.2 Summary

In summary, the profile of modern language teaching has changed over the past forty years. From its place as a relatively elitist, academic subject taught using traditional methods, it is evolving into a subject studied by all using methods designed to encourage communication. The current piece of research takes place with this as a background. Similar research carried out in other countries, cultures or situations may well have yielded different results.
Chapter Three

Review of the Literature

In this chapter I shall begin by discussing the role of motivation in language learning. Secondly, I shall introduce attribution theory as a proposed component of motivation in language learning. Thirdly, I shall provide a detailed review of attribution theory. Finally, I shall review the research based on attribution theory, which has been carried out in educational settings.

3.1 Motivation and the language classroom

In 1959 Gardner and Lambert suggested that second language achievement was related to motivation (Gardner and Tremblay, 1995:505). Since then various studies have investigated the role that motivation plays in language learning, and this concept has now become an important part of many theories of second language acquisition (Gardner and Tremblay, 1995:505).
Despite the interest in motivation in the language learning classroom, it has proved to be problematic for those wishing to conceptualise it due to its complex nature. Oxford and Shearin (1994:13) claim to have identified about "twenty distinguishable motivation categories". Williams and Burden (1997:94) note, "How highly a person is motivated to perform a certain task...will depend upon a complex set of interacting variables". Furthermore, Gardner and Tremblay (1995:505) cite Landy and Becker (1987) when explaining that the debate over motivation is a challenge since no one theory explains all aspects of motivational behaviour.

Until recently, most work on motivation in language learning has used models based on a socio-psychological view of language learning which links motivation with attitudes towards the community of speakers of the target language, and claims that learners with an interest in interacting with such speakers - integrative motivation - are likely to be more successful in learning the target language than those who are doing so for instrumental reasons (Dickinson, 1994:167).
Central to the debate over motivation in language learning appears to be the nature of language learning itself as a subject. There seems to be a generally accepted view mentioned by Williams and Burden (1997:115) that "learning a foreign language is different to learning other subjects". They quote Crookall and Oxford (1988) and Gardner (1985) when emphasising the social nature of foreign language learning. Au (1988:75) quotes Gardner (1985) as stating that "The learning of a second (or foreign) language is often viewed as an educational phenomenon...such a perception is categorically wrong..." in that it demands the acquisition of "symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community".

As a result, many models of language learning are rooted in the field of social psychology (Williams and Burden, 1996:116). The most influential model has been the socioeducational model of Gardner (1985). Williams and Burden (1997:116) explain that Gardner identifies motivation as "a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language".
While accepting the importance of the socioeducational model, many writers (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dickinson, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; and Dörnyei 1994a and 1994b) feel that this model is too narrow and that other factors outside the model require investigation. These writers have looked towards developments in mainstream education in order to construct a broader picture of motivation in language learning. These writers believe that the model should be broadened to take account of more cognitive views of learning, prevalent in research in mainstream educational psychology during the 1970s and 1980s. It appears that we are progressing towards a wider model of language learning in the classroom which can cater for the view of the foreign language as a 'different subject' whilst also including ideas from the literature on motivation from mainstream education.

In spite of this increased interest in motivation Dickinson (1994) notes that there is

a curious scarcity of reported research into motivation in language education, and such research that is reported may be felt to lack 'validity in that it is not well-grounded in the real world domain of the SL classroom, nor is it well-connected to other related educational research...' (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: p.470) (Dickinson, 1994:167).
Gardner and Tremblay (1995:505) note the contributions of Crookes and Schmidt, Oxford and Shearin and Dörnyei but explain that none of their contributions are based on empirical evidence and suggest that further investigation is necessary in order to give credence to their ideas. Dickinson (1995:168) mentions that other language learning theories "emphasize the similarities of the conscious (or semi-conscious) learning processes of language learning with learning in other subjects". He goes on to say that One can recognise the special nature of language learning - the need to acquire symbolic elements of a different culture and the probability of an innate language capacity - without denying that a great deal of the process of language learning, especially in the early stages, has much in common with the learning of other subjects, and that consequently educational theories of motivation may be relevant to language learning (Dickinson, 1995:168).

3.2 Proposed models of second and foreign language learning motivation

As I have mentioned above, a number of writers have tried to develop a more extensive model of motivation. Dörnyei (1994a) provides one such model. He divides language learning motivation into three levels which he calls the Language, the Learner and the Learning Situation (see figure 3.1).
The Language level includes integrative and instrumental motivation; components central to Gardner’s model. However, the Learner level concerns the learner as an individual and the Learning Situation level includes components linked to the course, the teacher and the learning group. Both of these second levels contain various components which have received a great deal of attention in the general educational literature during recent years (see figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1 Components of Foreign Language Learning Motivation**

**LANGUAGE LEVEL**
- Integrative Motivational Subsystem
- Instrumental Motivational Subsystem

**LEARNER LEVEL**
- Need for achievement
- Self confidence
  - Language Use Anxiety
  - Perceived L2 Competence
  - Causal Attribution
  - Self Efficacy

**LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL**

**Course-Specific Components**
- Interest
- Relevance
- Expectancy
- Satisfaction

**Teacher-Specific Components**
- Affiliative Drive
- Authority type
- Direct Socialisation of Motivation
  - Modelling
  - Task Presentation
  - Feedback

**Group-Specific Components**
- Goal-orientedness
- Norm and Reward System
- Group Cohesion
- Classroom Goal Structure

Dörnyei (1994a:280)
A previous model of motivation in foreign language learning, suggested by Dörnyei (1990), also includes instrumental and integrative motivation as well as components of the Learner level; need for achievement and attributions about past failures (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 A schematic representation of the conceptualized construct of motivation in foreign language learning

From Dörnyei (1990:68)
What becomes apparent on reviewing the relevant literature is that various additions to the construct of language learning motivation are tentatively suggested but, as Gardner and Tremblay (1995:505) have noted, few are tested. One such suggestion commonly proposed is attribution theory. It is the aim of this study to examine this concept further. The next section, therefore, discusses what is meant by attribution theory and identifies writers who have mentioned attribution theory in the literature on language learning.

### 3.2.1 Attribution theory in language learning motivation

Attribution theory focuses on the beliefs that individuals hold about the causes of events in their lives, and the behaviour that results from these beliefs. Many writers have mentioned this theory as a possible component of motivation in language learning. The models proposed above by Dörnyei, both mention attributions. In his 1990 model he explains that

attributions about past failures could be expected to affect motivation, because in FLL contexts 'learning failure' is a very common phenomenon (Dörnyei, 1990:67).

He goes on to acknowledge the need for more research into the relationship between attributions about past failures and foreign language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 1990:67).
Dörnyei's 1994 model includes an attributions component on the basis that attributions about past failures may be important in foreign language learning due to the regularity of failure as an outcome (Dörnyei, 1994a:279). He suggests that teachers should encourage students to attribute past failures to lack of effort, confusion or ineffective strategies. Although Dörnyei (1994a:281) does not explicitly state any hypothesis, he appears to suggest that learners who attribute failure to anything else should be encouraged by the teacher to see links between effort and outcome.

Oxford and Shearin (1994:21) also recognise the potential importance of attribution theory in the construction of a motivational model of language learning. However, they focus on successful outcomes.

Attribution theory adds the concept that higher satisfaction occurs when success is self-attributed than when success is attributed to external factors. When people believe they rather than luck, fate, the teachers, or an easy test have created the successful performance, they are happier with themselves and their skills (Oxford and Shearin 1994:21).

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) also include attributions in their discussion of motivation. They suggest that learners who attribute failure "to their own inabilities" instead of external causes probably have "a low estimate of their future success" which in turn may lead to failure related behaviour (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991:490).
Dickinson (1994:171) discusses the importance of learner autonomy in language learning motivation. In doing this he mentions the role of attribution theory in the promotion of autonomy. He suggests that attribution theory "provides evidence to show that learners who believe that they have control over their learning...tend to be more successful than others" (Dickinson, (1994:172).

Skehan (1989:50) discusses an "attributional analysis of cause". He says that the causative factors to which learners ascribe success are important in language learning. He explains that if ability and difficulty of language learning are thought to be important then persistence will be lower while if effort and luck are seen as prominent then persistence and motivation will be higher as the learners see themselves as having a potential impact on the learning.

Skehan (1989:52) concludes that there is a need to assess learners' beliefs about the causes of learning outcomes. He goes on to suggest that there is a lack of research in this area and that more is needed.

Williams and Burden (1997:108) believe that "attribution theory is an extremely promising area for research into language learning". They suggest that by finding out how learners attribute success and failure in language learning may help them "to take control of language learning outcomes".
The quantity of recent literature suggesting the investigation of causal attributions does not have a common thread. However, this confusion may arise from research into attributions in the area of mainstream education which has many questions unanswered.

In summary, recent discussion concerning classroom language learning motivation has emphasised the complex nature of this concept. Many factors have been suggested as possible determinants of this construct, one of which has been causal attributions. However, there is a lack of consensus regarding the precise role that attributions might play in language learning and therefore which aspects require investigation.

In order to gain a clearer picture as to what direction attributional research in language learning might take I shall now discuss the origins of attribution theory and how the theory has been used to investigate classroom motivation in general.
3.3 Attribution theory

Attribution theory originates from the work of Heider (1944, 1958). A number of writers have subsequently tried to develop different approaches to attribution theory, for example Jones and Davis (1965), Kelley (1967), Weiner et al. (1971) and Weiner (1986). These are mentioned by Biddle (1993). The most influential of these writers has been Weiner, who has investigated attribution theory, both on his own and with his co-authors, in a variety of contexts. Rogers (1987:197) credits Weiner's 1979 "statement of theory" as guiding research in attributions. Attribution theorists see human beings as 'amateur psychologists', seeking to understand the world around them and trying to make sense of events in their lives. The importance of this process lies in the proposition that an individual's perceptions regarding the causes of an outcome are central to future actions taken, even if these perceptions are not in fact accurate (Weiner, 1986).

Interest in attribution theory has been particularly keen in the area of achievement, looking at what individuals believe to be the causes of success and failure. This interest has in turn led to attribution theory being considered by researchers into education as part of a model for classroom motivation. Corno and Rohrkeper (1985) mention that Weiner (1979) proposes "a model of academic motivation" containing attributions as a central component.
Attribution theory can be divided into two areas: attribution theories and attributional theories. Attribution theories or theories of attribution are concerned with the way in which individuals come to decisions about the causes of events, whereas, attributional theories concern the subsequent consequences of attributing outcomes to different causes (Rogers, 1987) (see figure 3.3). This review is concerned with the second of these theories. However, I shall begin by briefly discussing the first area mentioned.

Figure 3.3 A General Model of Attribution

From: Kelley and Michela (1980)


3.3.1 The making of attributions

The investigation of attributions made in natural environments is not widespread (Biddle, 1993). However, Weiner (1979:4) explains when this personal search for the causes of outcomes to events is most likely to occur. He cites Folkes (1978) as demonstrating that attributions are more likely to be made following failure rather than success. He further suggests that a personal search for reasons is more likely when events are considered important rather than unimportant and outcomes are unexpected rather than expected. Weiner also comments that

it has been demonstrated that during task performance 'failure-orientated' or 'helpless' students especially tend to supply attributions (Diener & Dweck, 1978)
(Weiner,1979:4).

However, Weiner (1979:4) goes on to suggest that

attributions are supplied by the mastery-oriented as well, although not necessarily during or immediately following all task performances (Weiner, 1979:4).

It appears therefore that individuals make attributions concerning events in their lives but that this may not happen consistently.
3.4 Attribution theory and motivation

Depending on the nature of the attributions made by individuals the subsequent expectations and emotions experienced are likely to vary. This in turn may affect the future behaviour of individuals (Biddle, in press).

One of the most influential contributions made to the development of an attribution theory of motivation comes from Weiner et al. (1971). These writers greatly influenced the direction of attributional research by, according to Whitley and Frieze (1985), suggesting that one's affective and cognitive reactions to success or failure on an achievement task are a function of the causal attributions that are used to explain why a particular outcome occurred (Whitley and Frieze, 1985:608).

Weiner et al. (1971) claimed that there were four causes to which people attributed outcomes in achievement situations. These causes were ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. As a consequence a great deal of research has been carried out which has focused exclusively on these four causes. However, in subsequent publications Weiner (1979, 1983 and 1986) states that this was a premature conclusion based on the writings of Heider (1958), with no supporting data and that research confining itself to these four causes may lead to false conclusions.
Weiner (1979) explains that in their "original statement regarding the perceived causes of success and failure" he and his co-author said that in an achievement related context the four causes mentioned above were most likely to be assessed for causality. He goes on to explain that by listing these four causes it was never intended that they be interpreted as the only four possible attributions. Weiner (1983), however, reports on studies that have only used the four causes mentioned above:

A serious shortcoming of these studies is that the four causes mentioned above do not comprehensively represent the possible causal perceptions, or they may even be entirely inappropriate to the situation under study (Weiner 1983:533).

Weiner (1983:533) emphasises that Weiner et al. (1971) were specifically referring to achievement-related situations in their discussion of attributions and that in other areas of motivation different causes are probably necessary.

A number of studies have shown there to be many more than four possible perceived causes of success and failure. Biddle (in press) cites Roberts and Pascuzzi (1979) as finding the four original causes identified by Weiner et al. (1971) as being used 45% of the time. In another survey Little (1985) identified eighteen causes used by children to explain academic outcomes.
3.5 Dimensions

"Abramson et al. (1978) agree that it is not the specific attribution that is of importance, but rather its dimensional representation" Weiner (1986:219). Weiner (1979, 1983) cited by Russell, McAuley and Tarico (1987:1249) notes that an attribution can have different meaning depending on the person or situation. If this is the case then to infer causal dimensions from causal attributions may not be valid (Russell, McAuley and Tarico, 1987:1249).

Originally, Weiner et al. (1971) proposed two dimensions of causal attributions: locus of causality and stability. Locus of causality refers to the location of a cause as internal or external to the learner while stability represents the changeability of a cause over time. The four attribution elements, ability, effort, task difficulty and luck, were then represented along these dimensions (see figure 3.4).

The third dimension of controllability was later proposed by Weiner (1979:6). This concerns the extent to which an event or outcome can be controlled. As a result, Weiner (1979:7) proposed an eight-cell, three dimensional model for the causes of success and failure (see figure 3.5).

I shall now explain the significance of each of the dimensions in turn.
Figure 3.4 Weiner’s original model of attribution dimensions and elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
<th>EXTERNAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STABLE</td>
<td>Ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSTABLE</td>
<td>Effort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Biddle, 1993:440.

Figure 3.5 Causes of success and failure, classified according to locus, stability and controllability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
<th>EXTERNAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STABLE</td>
<td>UNSTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROLLABLE</td>
<td>Typical effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCONTROLLABLE</td>
<td>Ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.1 Locus of causality

The locus of causality dimension relates to the internality of causal attributions. If individuals see the outcomes of particular events as caused by themselves then they have an internal locus of causality for that outcome, while those who see the cause of a particular outcome as deriving from anything other than themselves have an external locus of causality. The consequences of such attributions are recognised as influencing emotional reactions and subsequent achievement related behaviour (Weiner, 1986). When individuals experience success and perceive that the cause of this success is derived from themselves then they are likely to experience feelings of pride. However, when failure is ascribed internally it is likely that individuals experience feelings of shame. These emotional reactions are reduced when the outcome is ascribed to external factors:

More pride or satisfaction is reported by people who attribute their success internally than by those who attribute success to an external cause (Weiner, 1979; Weiner, Russell and Lerman, 1979). These same studies have shown that internally attributed failures lead to more shame and dissatisfaction (Whitley and Frieze 1985:608-9).
These emotional reactions are likely to enhance self-esteem or self-worth after success but lower self-esteem or self-worth after failure. It is therefore likely that learners who have their self-esteem enhanced will wish to repeat the experience while those who have had their self-esteem damaged will be less keen on having the experience repeated. Weiner points out that this only applies to learners who want to succeed in a particular situation (Siegel and Shaughnessy 1996):

if the individual does not care about succeeding, it makes no difference (or little difference) what the attribution is for failure (Siegel and Shaughnessy 1996:167).

3.5.2 Stability

The stability dimension relates to whether the cause of the success or failure will change across time. If, for example, a positive outcome is attributed to a stable cause then the individual is likely to expect future success. Likewise, if an individual attributes a negative outcome to a stable cause, for example lack of ability, this is likely to lead to the belief that future success is not possible. It therefore follows that individuals are likely to exhibit greater persistence when they believe that a negative outcome was due to an unstable cause such as a lack of unstable effort or bad luck (Weiner, 1983, 1986).
The importance of ascertaining directly the dimensional properties of perceived attributions is borne out by a consideration of effort. As mentioned above researchers have often considered effort to be internal and unstable. However, such assumptions do not allow for statements such as 'I'm naturally lazy' which implies a stable lack of effort. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that children do not differentiate between effort and ability which suggests that perceptions of effort and ability are developmental (Nicholls, 1978).

3.5.3 Controllability

The controllability dimension of causality relates to the degree to which causes may be directly influenced by the will of the individual concerned or external agents. However, writers have had difficulty when trying to conceptualise this dimension (Bierhoff, 1989).

Weiner (1986) cited by Bierhoff (1989) explains that while humans may strive to have personal control, a problem arises when referring to controllable external factors; which at first sight appears to be a contradiction in terms.

From the perspective of the successful or failing person, external causes seem by definition to be uncontrollable, for they are not wilfully changed by the actor (Weiner, 1986:49).
External factors may be controllable by others but this does not fit dimensionally with the idea of personal control. Bierhoff (1989:159-60) as a result of this suggests that

the controllability dimension can be crossed with the stability dimension in the domain of internal causes but not in the domain of external causes. External causes are uncontrollable by definition (Bierhoff, 1989:159-60).

However, Weiner (1979:12) notes that

failure ascribed to others, such as the bias of a teacher or hindrance from students or family, will presumably generate great anger and hostility (Weiner (1979:12).

Although Weiner does not explicitly label these emotions as deriving from external-controllable causes, the situation he describes, from which the anger is derived, fits into the external-controllable cell of his eight cell model. In other words, the anger derives from others' effort (see figure 3.6).

**Figure 3.6 The consequences of failure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Effort (Controllable)</th>
<th>Lack of Ability (Uncontrollable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-generated Emotion (Internal)</td>
<td>GUILT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-generated Emotion (External)</td>
<td>ANGER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self- and other-generated consequences of failure due to lack of effort versus lack of ability.

(Adapted from Weiner, 1986:153)

The consequences related to the controllability dimension, similarly to the locus dimension, are emotional reactions. Feelings including anger, guilt, pity and shame derive from distinctions within this dimension (see figure 3.6) (Weiner, 1986).

For example, in addition to anger: guilt is generated when someone fails because of an internal controllable cause, such as lack of effort or negligence; pity may be felt if failure is experienced and is perceived as deriving from an external, uncontrollable cause; and shame (humiliation and embarrassment) is a dominant personal reaction when one has failed because of an internal uncontrollable cause, such as low ability (Weiner, 1986).

3.5.4 Further attribution dimensions

Further attributional dimensions have been proposed deriving from various investigations. The dimensions proposed include globality, intentionality, endogenous/exogenous and chosen/not chosen (Biddle, in press).

Of these, the dimension of globality deserves further investigation here. The globality dimension refers to the consistency of attributions across situations; distinguishing causes applying generally to outcomes of any kind, and those which apply to specific situations (Kelley and Michela, 1980). In a language learning environment individuals may, for example, see failure at learning the language as due to low language aptitude (specific) or low ability (general).

The addition of the globality dimension would enable researchers to discuss the concept of attributional style, which Biddle (1993:453)
explains as the "tendency to make particular attributions across different situations and time". The potential existence of attributional style is particularly appealing to those wishing to investigate classroom motivation since it would allow for the investigation of this across situations.

However, The existence of the globality dimension is questioned by Weiner (1986):

>a specific-global property has not emerged in any empirical analysis (Weiner, 1986:70).

Weiner in Siegel and Shaughnessy (1996) similarly expresses doubt as to the usefulness of attributional style:

I do not have strong beliefs in attributional styles. Attributions are very situation specific and often do not generalise .... The data on the generality of attributions across situations is very weak. I think that this has received more attention than has been deserved (Siegel and Shaughnessy 1996:171).

However, Abramson et al. (1978) and Seligman et al. (1984) have suggested a profile for a type of learner who attributes negative outcomes to internal, stable and global factors which results in a state known as learned helplessness. Characteristics of learned helpless individuals are, for example, poor performance on academic tasks, a lack of persistence, not seeking help when needed in school, and few strategies to deal with failure (Peterson, 1990).
I believe, despite Weiner's strong reservations concerning the usefulness of assessing attributions across situations, that in order for attributions to form part of a model of language learning motivation then it may be a form of attributional style, which should be assessed. However, if the globality dimension is seen as representing degrees of similarity between events and tasks, then learners are more likely to make similar attributions in events that more closely resemble each other. It should therefore be possible to predict that tasks taking place in similar circumstances, perhaps in the same lesson with the same teacher and practising the same skill, would be more likely to elicit the same attributions than tasks bearing no resemblance to each other. Since in a language lesson many characteristics are regularly repeated there may be some justification in ignoring globality when the research is focussed on one subject.

3.6 Attributions: Dichotomy or Continuum

Weiner (1986:44) explains that an area of contention in attribution theory is concerned with whether the locus dimension is dichotomous or a continuum. Although Weiner treats the locus dimension as an internal/external dichotomy there is evidence to suggest that subjects may attribute causes both internally and externally. Indeed, Weiner (1986:130) quotes research by Graham et al. (1984) which indicates the existence of 'intermediate' (internal and external) causes (see figure 3.7). This point receives little attention in the relevant literature.
3.7 Self-serving bias in attribution theory

The hedonic bias (self-serving bias) has been one of the most investigated effects in the attributional literature (Weiner, 1986:228).

Kelley & Michela (1980:474) explain the concept of self-serving bias in attribution theory. They cite reviews by Miller and Ross (1975) and Zuckermann (1979) which point out the tendency for the attributions of individuals for success to be internal and those for failure to be external. They are concerned with the reasons for and implications of this phenomenon.

Do these findings necessarily demonstrate motivated biases in attributions? (Kelley & Michela 1980:474).

This is an important question since subjects' reported attributions...
may not be those actually perceived by subjects. Instead, motivated by the wish to enhance their image following success or protect it following failure, subjects may consciously misreport their attributions to researchers. Kelley & Michela (1980:474), in a survey of previous literature suggest that such a bias may not be conscious. They explain that there is a strong tendency for subjects acting as observers of unknown actors also to explain their successes internally. Indeed, Marsh (1986:190) cites Riess et al. (1981:225) as suggesting that individuals may be reporting their true self-perceptions even when their responses appear unrealistic to the researcher. Marsh (1986) goes on to note that Bradley (1978) suggests that motivated bias is more likely if the event about which attributions are made is public, ego involved, unfamiliar or competitive.

The explanation of self-serving bias as a totally consciously motivated decision or at the other extreme an unconscious but accurate representation of self-perceptions appears to be unrealistic. Marsh (1986) concludes that

Consistent with Heider's (1958) original formulation, attributions are a function of both objective information and motivational tendencies (Marsh, 1986:191).


3.8 Actor/observer differences in attributions

A source of error in attributions, pointed out by Hewstone (1989) and Bierhoff (1989) is that of actor-observer differences. Both writers cite research by Watson (1982) who suggests that there are differences between attributions made by actors and those made by observers. Kelley and Michela (1980:477) explain the actor-observer differences by quoting (Jones & Nisbett, 1972):

Jones & Nisbett, (1972) stated their influential hypothesis as follows "there is a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable personal dispositions" (p.80) (Kelley and Michela, 1980:477).

One of the consequences of the actor-observer differences is that teachers and students may disagree over the causes of academic outcomes and therefore have differing views concerning what action to take following pupil failure (Juvonen, 1988). If teachers do not understand the true perceptions held by students about the causes of outcomes then, in the context of attribution theory, they may not fully understand their students' behaviour in the classroom.
3.9 Developmental factors in attributions

One element that is not given sufficient attention in many accounts of the attribution process in schools, including some of Weiner's own accounts, is the effects of development (Rogers, 1987:207).

One of the most important developmental issues concerns the proposition that young children do not differentiate between ability and effort. Rogers (1987:207) summarises the suggestions of Nicholls (1984) explaining that the young children are likely to see ability and effort as the same thing, whereas by adulthood they tend to see ability as a fixed capacity which dictates the limit of an individual's potential, irrespective of effort. He states that as children get older they become concerned not to attribute failure to ability as they begin to believe that ability is fixed. One solution to this is not to make an effort. This provides an explanation for failure which enables the learners to protect their self-worth.

In summary, perceived causal attributions have been proposed as a determinant of classroom motivation. It is proposed that attributions along the dimensions of locus of causality, stability, controllability and possibly globality have an influence on achievement behaviour. However, a number of issues in attributional research remain unresolved. These include the nature of dimensions as either dichotomies or continua, the existence and extent of self-serving bias, actor/observer differences in attributions and the degree to which attributions are developmental.

I shall now discuss literature which has considered attributions made in educational settings.
3.10 Research into classroom attribution theory

In this section I shall review research based on attribution theory carried out in classroom settings (a summary of 19 studies mentioned in this section are in Appendix A). Weiner (1979) argues that

In a school setting the search for understanding often leads to the attributional question of 'Why did I succeed or fail?' or, more specifically, 'Why did I flunk math?' or 'Why did Mary get a better mark than me on this exam?' Weiner (1979:3).

Attributional research in classroom settings does not have a long history. Frieze and Snyder (1980) explained the state of research into attributions made by children:

Although some aspects of the attribution process have been tested, we do not yet fully understand how children actually make attributional judgements in the classroom or what causal explanations they make (Frieze and Snyder, 1980:188).
In the past 20 years many investigations have been carried out in academic settings which have attempted to provide insights into the possible role of attributions in classroom motivation (see appendix A). These investigations have taken in a wide range of ages (5 years old to young adults), subjects, skills and events (e.g. classroom tasks, tests). However, it appears that despite the interest shown by writers in language learning (see section 3.1) only one investigation has attempted to look at the role of attributions in the second/foreign language classroom; Gardner and Tremblay (1995).

Researchers into achievement related attributions made by children are clear in their beliefs that attributions are important determinants of classroom motivation, for example:

Achievement attributions have significant consequences for subsequent achievement motivation and behavior (Wigfield, 1988:76).

From what we know already there is a link between the motivational patterns that a child will display and the way in which that child will attribute success and failure (Rogers 1987:209).

The significance of causal attributions lies in their effects on the expectancy of success, affective reactions to outcomes and persistence in future tasks (Hau and Salili, 1990:17).

It is believed, for example, that some post-failure attributions relating to causes
which cannot be controlled or altered may interfere with subsequent achievement-related behaviours (Chapman and Lawes, 1987:205).

Past attributions affect students' current motivation to achieve. The more students view past academic success as personally caused, likely to recur, and under their control, the greater their current achievement motivation. Perceived failures reduce achievement motivation when they are interpreted as solely the responsibility of the student, unlikely to be remediable, and outside their control (Johnson and Johnson, 1985).

However, there appears to be a lack of consensus as to the role played by attributions in motivation which is reflected by the references from the language learning literature mentioned above (see section 3.1.1).

In general, the investigations reviewed try to ascertain the kinds of attributions made by individual learners; attempting to determine the kinds of causes reported by students. The research surveyed includes both field and experimental studies. While it is difficult to draw conclusions from such a variety of research contexts, I shall now discuss some of the issues raised in this research.
3.10.1 The dimensions of causes reported in educational settings

The results of the investigations surveyed (see Appendix A) point towards the extensive use of internal-controllable causes (e.g. effort and preparation) as explanations of academic outcomes both for success and failure. This review indicates that attributions made to effort in classroom tasks and situations, and preparation in test outcomes are prominent in a number of investigations (e.g., Chapman and Lawes, 1987; Little, 1985; Buck, Clift and Povey, 1987; Bar-Tal, Goldberg and Knaani, 1984; and Willson and Palmer, 1983). However, in some investigations internal-controllable attributions did not feature as a major cause. For example, Dodds (1994), in an experimental investigation of attributions made for success and failure in a spelling test, found that subjects were reluctant to use lack of effort to explain failure. In such a context where the subjects cannot prepare it seems logical that attributions be made to ability and task difficulty, as was the case in the survey. In another investigation, Bar-Tal and Darom (1979) declared surprise in finding attributions of success to be mainly external and attributions of failure to be mainly internal. They explained that the results may be due to the influence of attributions made by teachers, where teachers mediate their beliefs about the students to the students who then acquire these beliefs themselves. Alternatively, they suggest that the results could be due to students experiencing failure in school over a period of years and beginning to perceive it as personal.
In many of the investigations surveyed the attributions made for internal-controllable causes are greater for success than for failure, which supports the existence of self-serving bias. Arkin and Maruyama (1979) found that the subjects in their research (young adults at university) reported attributions strongly supporting the existence of self-serving bias (see figure 3.8). However, the evidence is not so clear in other cases, for example, Skaalvik (1994) found that 6th grade students (aged 10-11) displayed less self-serving bias than did 9th grade students (aged 13-14) (see figure 3.9).

In 9th grade there was a strong tendency to use self-serving attributions. In 6th grade a similar but somewhat weaker tendency was found (Skaalvik, 1994:141).

**Figure 3.8 Means of attributions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance outcome</th>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal/External</td>
<td>Stable/Unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributions of individual elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the higher the mean, the greater the attribution for the element listed.

From Arkin and Maruyama (1979)
**Figure 3.9 Main attributions of perceived academic results among students**

**In general**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Help</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of Subjects</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Difficulty</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In mathematics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Help</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of Subjects</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Difficulty</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In Norwegian**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Help</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of Subjects</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Difficulty</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Skaalvik (1994)
The conclusions of Arkin and Maruyama (1979) and Skaalvik (1994) taken together, suggest that the concept of self-serving bias may be developmental. Indeed, Wigfield (1988) cites Harter (1985) who, based on her own findings, suggests that children are less likely than adults to seek to protect their egos through attributing failure externally. Nonetheless, there does appear to be a need for more research into the extent and implications of self-serving bias in children's perceived attributions. Arkin and Maruyama (1979:85) describe the "lack of evidence for the generality of the self-serving bias" as "lamentable".

3.10.2 Attributions, achievement and ability

A number of investigations draw comparisons between students who exhibit different levels of achievement. Hau and Salili (1990) in their study of primary age students in Hong Kong found that high achievers attributed successful exam performance more to internal and controllable causes while low achievers attributed such success more to external and uncontrollable causes. This is consistent with the findings of Frieze and Snyder (1980) who found that high ability children saw themselves as more responsible for their success and less responsible for their failures than low ability children, and Marsh (1989:198) who observed that

Students who were more academically able were more likely to attribute their academic successes internally and were more likely to attribute their academic failures externally than were students who were less academically able (Marsh, 1989:198).
Shell, Colvin and Bruning (1995:395) also found differences between the beliefs of high and low achievers.

Relative to high achievers, low achievers exhibited ... higher causality to factors that are external or uncontrollable ... this pattern of beliefs can have a strong negative impact both on motivation and on feelings of self-worth (Shell, Colvin and Bruning, 1995:395).

Butler and Orion (1990), in their survey of ten year olds in Israel, found differences between high and low achievers in relation to their perceptions of control.

The most striking findings indicated that high and low achievers differed consistently in both general and specific perceptions of unknown control (Butler and Orion, 1990:72).

They note that the relationship found in their study between the strong negative associations between school achievement and agreement that one does not understand the determinants of learning outcomes in the classroom confirm and expand on findings of other studies (Harter and Connell, 1984; Connell, 1985) (Butler and Orion, 1990:72).
They go on to suggest that

One possibility is that agreement with unknown control reflects an ego-protective strategy, whereby it is easier for failing students to say that they do not know why they failed than to attribute negative outcomes to their own lack of ability or effort (Butler and Orion, 1990:73).

This is consistent with findings reported by Connell (1985) who cites the findings of Avery and Ryan (1984), Connell (1981), Harter and Connell (1984) and Dweck and Elliot (1983) when concluding that a prerequisite for classroom success may be an understanding of how the outcomes occur.

3.10.3 Attributions and self-concept

A number of investigations draw comparisons between students who demonstrate a high or low self-concept. Skaalvik (1994), for example, shows that learners in a study of attributions made for general academic results, mathematics achievement and Norwegian language achievement provided patterns of attributions which varied with self-concept (see figure 3.10). Skaalvik (1994) found that students who had a high maths self-concept and low verbal self-concept or low maths self-concept and high verbal self-concept attributed their perceived results in the two school subjects differently and according to a self-serving prediction (Skaalvik, 1994:133).
Main attributions of perceived academic results in general among students with high, medium and low academic self-concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and help</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of subjects</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task difficulty</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>27.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>&lt;·01</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;·01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Skaalvik (1994)
**Figure 3.10b**

Main attributions of achievements in mathematics among students with high, medium and low maths self-concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and help</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of subjects</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task difficulty</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>103.635</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81.684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Skaalvik (1994)
**Figure 3.10c**

Main attributions of achievements in Norwegian among students with high, medium and low Norwegian self-concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and help</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of subjects</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task difficulty</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>88.395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>119.047</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Skaalvik (1994)

**Figure 3.10d**

Effort attributions in three contexts among students with high, medium and low academic self-concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort (general)</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort (maths)</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort (Norwegian)</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Skaalvik (1994)
3.10.4 Attributions and situation

An interesting aspect of the survey by Skaalvik (1994) is that it surveys general attributions for academic results and more specific attributions for achievement in school subjects. Skaalvik (1994) therefore appears to be carrying out research at two levels of globality. The significance of this can be seen when comparing the results of attributions made in specific subjects with the results in a general academic context (see figure 3.9). Skaalvik (1990:141) notes that external attributions were more extensive in specific subject areas than in general results. The evidence shown in figure 3.9 suggests that this is true for 9th grade students but the results for 6th grade students show a great similarity across both levels of globality. Skaalvik (1990:141) suggests that the reason for any differences may be because it is easier to focus on an external cause, such as task difficulty or poor teaching in a specific subject context than in a general academic context.

Further evidence of attributions being situation dependent are provided by Frieze and Snyder (1980) who found in their study, which included four achievement situations, that the causal belief structures of children varied between situations. They found that

Testing situations are viewed very differently than other achievement situations in school (Frieze and Snyder, 1980:194).

They explain for example that effort is shown as important generally but especially so in testing. They explain that their data suggests that children perceive each situation as having its own causal mechanism. (Frieze and Snyder, 1980:194)
A child’s causal belief structure, the causal schemata, is dependent on both the child’s maturity and the child’s experience with the situation. It does not appear from our data that a child tends to use the same type of causal explanations across situations. The causal belief structure is situation specific (Frieze and Snyder, 1980:195).

Marsh (1989:199) forwards an argument for the degree of attributional globality being developmental by finding evidence in his research to indicate that attributions may become more content specific with age. In his survey, Marsh (1989) found the level of self-serving bias correlated more closely between mathematics and reading for preadolescents than for adolescents.

The degree to which perceived attributions are situation specific or at the other extreme global is I believe an aspect of attribution research which requires further investigation. As mentioned previously (see section 3.4.4), it is this dimension which is an essential component of attributional style. If attributions are situation specific as Frieze and Snyder (1980) suggest, then research should focus on the types of situations which recur in the classroom. Indeed, Wigfield (1988) suggests more situational influences should be investigated.

### 3.10.5 Attributions and gender

The relationship between attributions and gender has been considered in a number of investigations. Buck, Clift and Povey (1987:222) report that studies on secondary age children have shown that girls are generally more
internal (Cooper et al., 1981), attribute their own successes to luck (Bar-Tal and Frieze, 1976), neglect effort and emphasize a lack of ability following failure (Dweck and Reppucci, 1973; Nicholls, 1975; Wiegers and Frieze, 1977) (Buck, Clift and Povey, 1987:222).

These findings are supported by Nicholls (1979:98) who states that his research suggested that girls tended more than boys to attribute failure to lack of ability; which he claims was consistent with many other results.

However, other researchers (e. g., Frieze and Snyder, 1980; Wigfield, 1988; Marsh, 1986) have reported no significant gender differences. For example, Frieze and Snyder (1980:195) report "very few sex differences" in their data which they say suggests that boys and girls do not differ in how they view causality in general (Frieze and Snyder, 1980:195).

3.10.6 Attributions and age

In addition to the discussion concerning the development of perceptions of ability and effort mentioned above (see section 3.8) other developmental trends have been reported in classroom research on attributions.

Frieze and Snyder (1980:194) found an increase with age in the use of unstable causes to account for outcomes and the use of 'lack of effort' to explain failure.
Marsh (1986:199) finds in his research that younger students showed a large self-serving bias for ability attributions, whereas for older children the bias was smaller. Of these older children the lowest ability subjects showed no bias at all. Marsh suggests that as less able children grow older and continue to receive consistently negative feedback about their achievement levels, high ability becomes less viable as an explanation of academic success, and poor ability becomes more viable as an explanation of academic failure (Marsh, 1986:199).

The findings of Marsh (1986) are similar to those shown from Skaalvik (1994), discussed above (see section 3.10.4) in that internal attributions appear to increase with age.

3.10.7 Attributions and subject preference

Karniol (1987) who researches failure in tests provides evidence to suggest that liking and disliking of school subjects is a critical factor in the causal attribution process (Karniol, 1987:24).

She goes on to explain that in her research

The more ego-involved, the more likely
students were to cite test-specific causes for failure (Karniol, 1987:24).

She explains that this allows individuals to think that a negative outcome was unstable and that ego-involved students appear to prefer to believe that failures are not going to be repeated.

When one is not highly ego-involved, there would seem to be less of a need to believe that failure outcomes will not recur (Karniol, 1987:24).
3.10.8 Attributions and learner orientation

Recent research suggests that attributions for achievement may vary as a function of individuals' goal orientations (Hau and Salili, 1990:19).

Performance goal orientations, where learners are compared or compare themselves against each other, and learning (mastery) goal orientations, where subjects are gauged or gauge themselves against previous performances, have been compared for the types of attributions given by learners. Hau and Salili (1990:19) cite research by Ames (1984) who found that effort attributions dominated in learning oriented conditions. Whereas, ability attributions were more abundant under performance goal oriented conditions. The findings of Hau and Salili (1990) showed a relationship between achievement goals and causal attributions.

The students with stronger performance goals attributed more to uncontrollable causes while those with stronger learning goals attributed more to internal causes and study at home, but less to home conditions (Hau and Salili, 1990:27).

Hau and Salili (1990) note that they found older learners to be more learning oriented which they suggest may reflect the value placed on effort in Chinese culture.
3.11 Summary

In summary, a number of investigations have focused on attributions made in classroom settings. These investigations have looked at a number of different variables which may influence the pattern of attributions made by children at school. The most interesting conclusions found relate to those conditions which appear to elicit attributions which protect or enhance self-esteem and those which lead to attributions which produce negative affect. The ability, achievement record, age, self-concept, gender, orientation and preferences of learners as well as the setting and nature of the event may all influence the nature of attributions made.

In conclusion, in this section I have described how writers in language learning have made suggestions for a model of classroom language learning and how causal attributions have featured in a number of suggestions. I have then discussed the nature of attribution theory and how it has been suggested as a factor contributing to motivation. Finally, I have reviewed research carried out in educational settings which has focussed on the nature of attributions made by children.

In the next chapter I shall outline the specific objectives of this investigation and discuss the design of this research.
Chapter Four

Design of the Study

In this chapter I shall discuss the design and implementation of this study. I shall firstly, detail the specific objectives of the investigation. I shall then explain the principles which underpin this research. I shall then go on to describe the subjects who formed the sample and explain how the research methods were constructed and implemented. Finally, I shall describe what I consider to be some of the limitations of this study.

4.1 The specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study are:

a) to find out if the patterns of attributions given by the subjects in this study are similar to those given by subjects in previous investigations in educational settings.
b) to examine the language learning situations in which subjects identify themselves as having done well and not done well and thus gain an insight into how learners perceive success and failure in such situations.

c) to analyse the degree to which learners see themselves or others as the cause of the language learning outcomes which they identify in the research.

d) to analyse the degree to which learners see themselves or others as having control over the situations which they identify.

e) to investigate any patterns relating to gender, school or ability bands which may exist in the subjects' perceptions of locus of causality and control of language learning.

f) to tentatively suggest, based on the findings of this research, possible directions that could be taken by any future research based on attribution theory in language learning.

4.2 Principles of the design of the study

The summaries of previous studies in this area (see Appendix A) detail the methods used in each investigation. A review of these investigations shows that traditionally researchers have taken two kinds of approaches to obtain data concerning attributions. In some cases, for example Dodd (1994), the researchers have taken a limited
number of causes, often reflecting the four causes originally mentioned by Weiner et al. (1971), and presented these to subjects for selection. In other cases, subjects have been encouraged to provide open-ended responses so that the researchers then interpret the dimensions of the responses.

The design of this study attempts to take account of some important developments in attribution research. Two important principles set this research apart from much of the research reported in Chapter Three and summarised in Appendix A. Firstly, in accordance with the studies mentioned in section 3.3, attributional research should not restrict subjects to a closed set of responses but allow them to respond in their own words. Secondly, as mentioned in section 3.4, attributional research should not assume the dimensionality of subject responses. In the following sections I shall expand on these principles.

### 4.2.1 The range of responses used in attribution research

An important principle drawn from attribution research concerns the assumptions that researchers make about the causes of outcomes and subsequently the research questions they use in their investigations. Although Weiner (1979:4) pointed out that it was an error to believe the four causes originally stated in attribution theory could explain all attributions, many studies continue to assume that attributions are limited to these original four, for example Whitehead, Anderson and Mitchell (1987) and Dodd (1994).

Rogers (1987:198) explains that "there is now evidence (Little, 1985) to show that attributions made under classroom conditions are very varied and may possibly require a different category system." Furthermore, Rogers (1987:209) cites Little (1985) when arguing that children should respond in their own words in attribution research:
Little (1985) has shown that when allowed to express their attributions for success and failure in their own words, schoolchildren in the 5-14 age range use a wider variety of causes than those typically covered by attributional research (Rogers 1987:209).

4.2.2 The dimensional interpretation of attributions

A limitation of the classroom research reported in the previous chapter is that all the studies make assumptions about the dimensionality of attributions given by subjects which, as has previously been mentioned, may not be accurate interpretations. Russell (1982:1137) identifies this problem referring to it as the 'fundamental attribution researcher error'. He explains that

In the traditional attribution paradigm, an essential step involves the translation by the researcher of causal attributions into causal dimensions (Russell, 1982:1137).

He goes on to explain that

The danger in this procedure is that the researcher and the attributor may not agree on the meaning of a causal attribution. One difficulty is that attributional statements are often ambiguous (Russell, 1982:1137).
Indeed, Russell, McAuley and Tarico (1987:1249) point out that "Weiner (1979, 1983) has noted that the meaning of an attribution may vary greatly from person to person and situation to situation." They go on to point out that in many studies the individual subjects' understanding of a cause is assumed equal to the theoretical meaning of a cause which "may result in an invalid assessment of the causal dimensions" (Russell, McAuley and Tarico, 1987:1249). They emphasize that

Measurement procedures that rely on the theoretical meaning of causal attributions in terms of dimensional characteristics appear to be less valid than direct assessments of the dimensions (Russell, McAuley and Tarico, 1987:1255).

and that

One can argue that research using such measurement procedures does not provide a valid test of the theory (Russell, McAuley and Tarico, 1987:1255).

4.2.3 Summary

In this research I shall follow the principles outlined above. I shall allow the subjects to give open-ended responses; not restricting them to 'traditional' attributional responses. I shall also investigate the causal dimensions associated with subjects' responses by including questions about how they perceive the
dimensionality of these responses. I shall however, also attempt to interpret the dimensionality directly in order to assess the degree to which the researcher and attributor agree on the causal dimensions of the responses.

4.3 Method

The research for this investigation consisted of two parts: a questionnaire survey involving 280 subjects, and a small sample of interviews with 16 of the subjects who completed the questionnaire. I originally identified the interview as being the research method I required for this research. However, time constraints meant that only 16 interviews could be carried out. As a result, I decided to design a questionnaire to provide the breadth of data necessary and use the interviews to verify the validity of the questionnaire and to gain a deeper insight into the beliefs of some of the subjects.

4.3.1 The Questionnaire participants

The subjects of this investigation were 280 8th grade secondary students attending two schools in the South-East of England. The average age of the subjects was 13.25 years. Figure 4.1 (page 7) shows a summary of the genders and foreign language ability bands of the subjects. The relatively small number of subjects from the 'low ability bands' is proportional to the overall population. The schools used in this survey were School A and School B. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 (page 7) show summaries of the genders and ability bands of the subjects by school.
### Figure 4.1 The subjects of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability Bands</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 4.2 The Subjects from School A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 4.3 The Subjects from School B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability Bands</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 The schools

School A is a suburban secondary school which was established in 1956 and gained Grant Maintained Status in 1992. It is five-form entry from year 7 and has just less than 1000 students. The school allocates 15% of the year 8 timetable to modern foreign languages. In this time all pupils learn two languages selected, from French, German and Spanish. The subjects of this survey represent all year 8 students who were present on the day that the questionnaire was administered. For language lessons the students are divided into eight groups, of which three are designated as high ability, three middle ability and two low ability. The students are banded according to attainment in the previous year’s assessments.

School B is a comprehensive school with a large catchment area in East Surrey. It is twelve-form entry from year 7 and has just over 2000 students. The pupils in year 8 learn one language selected, from French or German, which takes up 12.5% of the timetable. The exceptions to this are those subjects in the high ability band who learn both of these languages. The subjects of this survey represent approximately 40% of year 8 students who were present on the day that the questionnaire was administered. The groups surveyed included two designated as high bands, two as middle bands and one as low band. The banding policy is based upon English and maths attainment in previous years.
4.3.3 The Development of the questionnaire

It was decided that the main instrument of research in this investigation should be a questionnaire. The reasons for this were that the amount of time available for the collection of data was limited and this method would allow for a large sample of subjects to be surveyed and thus allow a statistical analysis to be carried out.

The questionnaire used in the survey was developed through a series of pilot studies, carried out during the two weeks before the actual survey. All the pilot questioning was carried out at a Middle School in Exeter. The subjects were 7th grade students (11-12 years).

4.3.4 The first pilot questionnaire

The first pilot (see appendix B) was administered using a language learning adaptation of the Causal Dimension Scale II adapted for children (CDSII-C) which was developed by Vlachopoulos and Biddle (1995) from the Revised Causal Dimension Scale (CDSII) by McAuley, Duncan and Russell (1992). It was decided that this form of questionnaire was appropriate since it measured four dimensions: causality (internal and external), stability, controllability and globality. For each dimension there were 3 questions with one question for each dimension reversed. This was designed to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire.

The results of this initial pilot proved to be inconclusive. A number of problems were apparent. The questionnaire was too long with the subjects losing concentration quickly and having difficulty in interpreting some questions. A further drawback of the questionnaire in the context of this study was that it elicited one achievement outcome, in which the subjects wrote about the reason for either
success or failure but not both. The subjects without exception chose to write about successful events. Since I wished to investigate both successful and unsuccessful events this was an unsatisfactory result. This was especially true since attributions for unsuccessful events are considered important by both attribution theorists (e.g., Weiner, 1979) and writers in language learning (e.g., Dörnyei 1990).

In addition to these points, pilot research by Williams and Burden (unpublished) in the area of attributions suggests that learners often have two or three causes that readily come to mind, and that the traditional internal/external dichotomous continuum on which many of these attributions are measured may be questioned since a cause may be seen as both internal and external at the same time.

In addition, the questionnaire used in this context did not prove to be reliable since subjects gave contradictory responses to questions measuring the same dimensions.
4.3.5 The second pilot questionnaire

I decided since I wanted to investigate successful and unsuccessful events and allow for more than one cause to be given that I would restrict the number of questions and keep the questionnaire short and simple. As a result, I designed a new questionnaire (see appendix C) which was different in four ways from the CDSII-C. Firstly, it asked subjects about an event in which they believed they had done well and one in which they believed they had not done well. Secondly, it provided the opportunity for up to four causes to be given which subjects felt were relevant to the outcome. Thirdly, instead of a likert-scale, a 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' answer grid was used since in this research I was more interested in the direction of the causal dimensions than their degree. The option of 'don't know' was introduced to take account the observations of Butler and Orion (1990) and Connell (1985) mentioned above (see Chapter 3) who suggest that knowledge of control was important for success in the classroom. Finally, I decided to scale down the objectives of the investigation by not fully investigating all four dimensions. The reason for this was again to maintain the reliability of the remaining questions, since a questionnaire looking at all four dimensions was proving too long. Therefore, the second pilot questionnaire included questions about learners’ perceived locus of causality and control of outcomes but did not attempt to investigate the globality or the stability of the events identified. However, questions were included on the 'didn't do well' section which investigated the stability of control.

4.3.6 The results of the second pilot questionnaire

The results of the second pilot suggested that further changes were required before the questionnaire could be considered for use in a full survey.
It appeared that the concerns over the internal/external dichotomy were manifesting themselves; a number of respondents wished to answer 'yes' to both 'Is this reason because of you?' and 'Is this reason because of someone else or something else?' but were unsure of how to respond since they felt one was a stronger 'yes' than the other.

The wording of the questionnaire was causing difficulty. Some subjects were unsure of what was meant by the word 'cause' which, as a result, was preventing them from completing the task unaided. In addition, many subjects did not understand the word 'control' in the sense implied by the questions 'Is this something you can control?' and 'Is this something others can control?'. It appears that for many of these subjects the word control only had a physical meaning.
4.3.7 The third pilot questionnaire

As a result of the evidence of the second pilot I decided to substitute the word 'cause' with the word 'reason' in the third pilot. Biddle (1993:437) cites Buss (1978) who argues that attribution theorists "have used the terms causal and reason interchangeably." Biddle (1993:437) goes on to explain that Buss (1978) argues that cause is "that which brings about change" while reason is "that for which a change is brought about (e.g. goals, purposes etc.)" and that Buss (1978) advocates the correct use of these terms. Unfortunately while the argument put forward by Buss is a valid one, in this case the word 'reason' is more appropriate since most of the subjects in the pilot understood it as meaning cause.

Similarly, due to the difficulty the pilot subjects were having with the questions 'Is this something you can control?' and 'Is this something others can control?', I decided to discuss alternative suggestions with the subjects themselves. An added problem was that some of the subjects were not differentiating between the questions about locus of causality and controllability. The resulting questions for controllability in successful situations seemed strangely worded - 'Is this something you can decide about?' and 'Is this something others can decide about?'. However, I decided to use these questions in the third pilot questionnaire because the subjects understood the questions to be asking about control and the questions differentiated this concept, in the minds of the subjects, from locus of causality.
In the third pilot I also limited the questionnaire to three possible reasons because only one of the subjects in the second pilot had completed four reasons. In addition, as a response to those subjects who wished to respond 'yes' for both internal and external locus but show a difference in the importance of the internal and external dimensions, a fourth option was added to the questions concerning locus of causality - 'yes, a bit'.

This third pilot questionnaire (see Appendix D) was carried out on a further ten subjects. The results proved to be satisfactory. No assistance was required by any subject during completion, and all questionnaires were completed satisfactorily. As a result I decided to use this questionnaire for the full survey.

4.3.8 The questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the inquiry (see appendix D) consisted of two sides of A4 paper. On one side the subjects wrote about doing well and on the other they wrote about not doing well.

In both cases they first wrote about the event which they had chosen. This procedure was adopted so that they were thinking about the particular event in question before they answered any of the questions and to provide as much evidence as possible of the kind of event that the subjects had considered.
The answer grid for the 'did well' section of the questionnaire consisted of four multiple choice questions to be answered for each cause identified by the subjects:

a) 'Is this reason because of you?' which concerns the internality of causality;

b) 'Is this reason because of someone or something else?' which concerns the externality of causality;

c) 'Is this reason something you can decide about?' which concerns the degree of internal control;

d) 'Is this reason something others can decide about for you?' which concerns the degree of external control.
The answer grid for the 'didn't do well' section of the questionnaire consisted of six multiple choice questions to be answered for each cause identified by the subjects. The locus questions were identical to those on the 'did well' question sheet. The remaining four questions were:

a) 'Could you have done something about this?' which concerns the degree of internal control;

b) 'Is this reason something others can decide about for you?' which concerns the degree of external control.

c) Could you do anything about this next time?

d) Could someone else do anything about this next time?
4.3.9 The questionnaire procedure

The questionnaire was completed in normal modern language lessons during the week beginning Monday, 8 July 1996. All the questionnaires were administered by the Head of Languages of each school, who were briefed by me and given all the necessary materials including an instruction sheet to follow (see Appendix F). I emphasised the importance of following the instructions carefully. The children were told that the questionnaire they were about to complete formed part of a piece of research being carried out to find out more about learning languages in schools. They were assured that, although the questionnaire was not anonymous, it would not be used for any other purpose than that explained to them, and that no individual answers would be shown to any staff at the school. They were further reassured that the questionnaire was not an exam and that there were no right or wrong answers.

The questionnaires were then distributed for them to write their personal details. While they did this the overhead projector was switched on for them to read the prepared example which was from a PE lesson (see Appendix E). I then went through the answers explaining each response. After this was complete the head of department answered any questions that the subjects had and then asked them to fill in the first side of the questionnaire which asked them about a language learning event in which they had done well. When they finished this they then went on to complete the reverse which asked them about a language learning event in which they had not done well. After twenty minutes all the completed sheets were collected and sealed in an envelope.
4.3.10 Procedure for analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire in this survey were processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) at the University of Exeter, School of Education. The data for events where subjects did well and did not do well were entered on a spreadsheet.

Tests for independence were carried out using chi-square analysis comparing the dimensions of attributions given against outcome, gender, school, situation ability band and teaching group.

4.4 The interviews

It was decided that interviews should be used in conjunction with the questionnaires as a means of verifying the reliability of the research and gaining an insight into other aspects of attribution research which could not be covered in the questionnaire. Due to the time constraints under which this research took place, extensive interviews could not be carried out. Therefore the results of the interviews should be treated as an indication only of the wider aspects of attribution.

The interview participants were selected at random from the 280 questionnaire participants with the condition that eight should be from each school of which one girl and one boy should be top band, two girls and two boys middle band and one girl and one boy lower band. All participants were given the opportunity to decline to take part in the interviews. This resulted in one participant being substituted on the day of the interview.
The interviews were conducted using the Language Learning Attribution Interview Schedule developed by Williams and Burden (1996) (see appendix G). Each interview lasted for approximately 35 minutes and took place during the normal school day during the week before the questionnaire survey.

4.5 Limitations of the study

Before considering the results of this study, there are a number of limitations which need to be taken into account.

It may be the case that some subjects who took part in this research may not have considered the task presented to them as seriously as I would have wished. If this is true then they may not have thought as carefully as required about either the event or the causes of the event chosen.

If time had allowed it would have been preferable to carry out a study of different age groups, so that possible differences between ages could have been analysed. It is due to this lack of time that only year 8 groups were selected.

The questionnaire was limited to a full investigation of just two dimensions; locus of causality and control and can therefore make no inferences about other dimensions.

The results of the study should be considered within the context and the environment in which they were obtained. Similar research carried out elsewhere and at a different time may well yield different results.

The interviews carried out for this research numbered just 16. This sample, although too small to draw strong conclusions, serves to support the reliability of the accompanying questionnaire and to provide a greater insight into the thinking of some of the subjects.
Finally, there proved to be no statistical analysis appropriate for testing the significance of the questionnaire data when compared across outcomes, that is, comparing doing well and not doing well. The closest analysis that could be used was chi-square. However, the results obtained do not satisfy the requirement of independence necessary for chi-square analysis.

It is with these limitations in mind that the results of this survey should be interpreted with caution.
Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall analyze the data collected for this study and discuss the results. Firstly, I shall analyse the attributions given by the subjects in the questionnaire. Secondly, I shall analyse the possible effects that gender, school and ability band and learning situation may have on the pattern of attributions given in the questionnaire. Thirdly, I shall analyse the interviews and discuss the evidence presented by them. The full results of the questionnaire are in Appendix H. The full interview transcriptions may be found in Appendix I.

5.2 Attributions given by the subjects

The 281 subjects of this study produced a total of 718 reasons for 273 successful events and a total of 652 reasons for 272 unsuccessful events. This gives an average of 2.63 reasons per successful event identified and 2.39 per unsuccessful event identified. The missing seven successful events consisted of six invalid sheets and one in which the subject claimed never to have done well in languages. The missing eight unsuccessful events consisted of four invalid sheets and four in which the subjects claimed never to have not done well. Although theorists suggest that outcomes have one perceived cause, the subjects' responses in this research show that actors may believe that outcomes can have a number of causes. Since it is the subjects' perceptions of causes that are important in attribution research, I
believe that research which asks subjects for just one cause may omit important data.

I shall now analyse the dimensions of the attributions given in the questionnaire.

5.2.1 The dimensions of the attributions given by the subjects

The internal and external dimensions of locus and control revealed by the questionnaire were analysed separately. Both the internal dimensions and the external dimensions were divided into five categories. The first three categories were for positive responses to the locus questions. The first category was for a positive response to the control question (locus with control), The second was for a negative response to the control question (locus without control) and the third was for a response of ‘don’t know’ to the control question (locus with unknown control). The fourth category was for all negative responses to the locus question (no locus). Finally, the fifth category was for all responses of ‘don’t know’ to the locus question (unknown locus). The questionnaire responses and the categories into which they fall are summarised in figure 5.1.
**Did well questionnaire - Internal dimensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something you can decide about? (Internal control)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something you can decide about? (Internal control)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>without control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something you can decide about? (Internal control)</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No internal locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Unknown locus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Didn’t do well questionnaire - Internal dimensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you have done anything about this? (Internal control)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you have done anything about this? (Internal control)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>without control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internal locus with unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you have done anything about this? (Internal control)</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No internal locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus)</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Unknown locus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Did well questionnaire - External dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Without control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus with unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control)</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>Unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No external locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>Unknown locus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Didn’t do well questionnaire - External dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus with control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this? (External control)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this? (External control)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Without control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External locus with unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this? (External control)</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>Unknown control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No external locus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of someone else or something else? (External locus)</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>Unknown locus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These categories are not labeled according to Weiner’s classifications since I wish to focus upon the dimensional representations of the attributions, that is the nature of the perceived locus and control. The reason for this, as stated in Section 4.2.2, is that the attributions given do not always translate accurately into classifications, such as, effort, ability or difficulty.

**Figure 5.2 Internal dimensions given by subjects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of attributions</th>
<th>Did Well</th>
<th>Did not do well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus and control</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(62.3%)</td>
<td>(55.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus with no control</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.2%)</td>
<td>(10.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus with unknown control</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.9%)</td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Internal locus</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(87.5%)</td>
<td>(71.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No internal locus</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.9%)</td>
<td>(25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown locus</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.6%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>703</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>71.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.2 shows the dimensional representation of responses to questions concerning internal locus and control. It shows that the dimensions of the responses are dependent upon the nature of the outcomes, that is, whether they were perceived to be successful or not. The data shows that the denial of responsibility for outcomes in the case of doing well to be 10.9%. However, for not doing well the level of denial of responsibility is higher at 25.9%. This is reciprocated by the finding that 87.5% of responses were internal for doing well and 71.6% were internal for not doing well. These findings provide evidence of the existence of self-serving bias. This has been a feature of many previous investigations (see Sections 3.6 and 3.9.1).

The responses concerning internal dimensions show greater internalising for positive outcomes than for negative outcomes. Within internal locus, internal locus with control represents the largest dimension with 62.2% of causes for doing well and 55.5% of causes for not doing well. This response shows that a majority of the attributions, for both doing well and not doing well are perceived to be internal and controllable. Such attributions are more likely to lead to motivated behaviour in the future. However, a small but significant number of causes for not doing well (10.3%) were attributed to internal/uncontrollable causes which are characteristics of the state of learned helplessness. Individuals holding such perceptions are likely to show less persistence in the future (see section 3.5.4).
### Figure 5.3 External dimensions given by subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>Did well</th>
<th>Did not do well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External locus and control</strong></td>
<td>95 (13.5%)</td>
<td>170 (26.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External locus with no control</strong></td>
<td>155 (22.0%)</td>
<td>86 (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External locus with unknown control</strong></td>
<td>69 (9.8%)</td>
<td>46 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total External locus</strong></td>
<td>319 (45.3%)</td>
<td>302 (47.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No external locus</strong></td>
<td>352 (50.0%)</td>
<td>304 (47.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown locus</strong></td>
<td>33 (4.6%)</td>
<td>28 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>704</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Value</strong></td>
<td>45.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degrees of Freedom</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance</strong></td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.3 shows the external locus and control perceived by the subjects. The data shows a significant relationship between the categories of attributions and the outcomes. The main difference between the patterns of attributions appears to be the level of external control. Indeed, external locus appears to be independent of the nature of the outcome, that is, the level of externalising does not depend on whether the outcome was positive or negative (see appendix H). The subjects have given external controllable attributions in 13.5% of causes for doing well. This figure is higher at 26.8% for not doing well. In the case of external uncontrollable attributions the reverse is true; 22.0% of attributions for doing well are external and uncontrollable, whereas 13.6% of attributions for not doing well fall into this dimension. The reason for this outcome is not clear. However, a possible reason may be the higher incidence of language tests being discussed when doing well compared with language learning when not doing well (see section 5.4).

The data in figure 5.3 shows the quantity of external attributions to be smaller than the internal attributions shown in figure 5.2. The denial of any external influence is 50.0% for doing well and 47.9% for not doing well which indicates that these causes are almost entirely internal; 9 causes (1.3%) for doing well and 35 causes (5.4%) for not doing well were not attributed internally or externally.
Despite the evidence that a large number of causes have attributions which produce motivated behaviour, there is evidence that many causes may lead to non-motivated behaviour. The 25.9% of causes denying blame for not doing well are, if stable, likely to lead the subjects who made them to reduce their achievement striving in the future. The same is true of those subjects who gave internal and uncontrollable causes (10.3% of causes), external and controllable causes (26.8% of causes) and external and uncontrollable causes (13.6% of causes) for not doing well.

I shall now compare the response to the internal locus and external questions within the same outcome.

5.2.2 The Locus dimension

Two questions were asked concerning locus. The question ‘Is this reason because of you?’ investigated internal locus while the question ‘Is this reason because of someone or something else?’ investigated external locus. The responses to the questions concerning locus and doing well are shown in figure 5.4 while those concerning locus and not doing well are shown in figure 5.5.
Figure 5.4 Locus for doing well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External Locus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Locus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td><strong>Don't Know</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>247 (34.8%)</td>
<td>342 (48.2%)</td>
<td>32 (4.5%)</td>
<td>621 (87.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>68 (9.6%)</td>
<td>9 (1.3%)</td>
<td>1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>78 (11.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don't Know</strong></td>
<td>6 (0.6%)</td>
<td>5 (0.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>11 (1.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>321 (45.2%)</td>
<td>356 (50.1%)</td>
<td>33 (4.6%)</td>
<td>710 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.4 indicates that 34.8% of the attributions in which subjects perceived that they had done well were believed by the subjects to have derived both internally and externally. This supports the existence of, what Graham et al. (1984) call, intermediate causes (see section 3.5). However, the majority of causes (48.2%) were believed to be internal only, while only 9.6% were believed to be external only.

Figure 5.5 Locus for not doing well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External Locus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Locus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td><strong>Don't Know</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>174 (26.9%)</td>
<td>270 (41.7%)</td>
<td>19 (2.9%)</td>
<td>463 (71.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>127 (19.6%)</td>
<td>35 (5.4%)</td>
<td>7 (1.1%)</td>
<td>169 (26.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don't Know</strong></td>
<td>7 (1.1%)</td>
<td>6 (0.9%)</td>
<td>3 (0.5%)</td>
<td>16 (2.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>308 (47.5%)</td>
<td>311 (48.0%)</td>
<td>29 (4.5%)</td>
<td>648 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.5 indicates that over a quarter of the causes identified by the subjects for events in which they perceived they had not done well were believed to have intermediate causes, that is, that the causes derived from both internally and externally. In addition to this 41.7% of causes were seen as only internal and 19.6% of responses were seen as only external.

The data presented in Figures 5.4 and 5.5 suggests that research into attributions should not assume that the locus dimension is dichotomous. The evidence presented in this study suggests that a significant minority of causes were perceived as both internal and external. This applied to both successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

5.2.3 Summary

In summary, the data presented so far supports the existence of self-serving bias. However, the bias in this is not consistent across all the dimensions assessed. These data suggest that, on average, the subjects in this investigation perceived events in which they did well as being more internal and controllable than those in which they did not do well. This is consistent with previous investigations in educational settings and adds strength to the argument that self-serving bias exists when individuals make self-attributions. It also serves as a validation for the current investigation.
Therefore this data supports the view that some individuals think differently when making attributions for positive and negative outcomes. This in turn lends support to the view put forward by Dorneyi (see Sections 3.1 and 3.1.1) that attribution researchers wishing to investigate low motivation should investigate attributions for failure since these tend to produce the largest number of maladaptive attributions, that is attributions that are likely to lead to non-motivated behaviour.

In addition, there is evidence that many subjects in this study can readily explain causes as deriving internally and externally. Much of the previous research into attributions in classroom settings has assumed that locus is a dichotomy since attribution theorists have proposed this. However, attribution theory is based on actor perceptions. If actors perceive causes as deriving from more than one origin then research should take account of this.

In section 5.2.1 it was indicated that the dimensions of the attributions would not be interpreted. This decision was made because it was expected that there would be inconsistencies between the researcher interpreted causes of outcomes and those suggested by the subjects themselves. The data provided a number of instances of this (see appendix H). For example, many subjects cited revision or lack of revision as a cause. However, the dimensions which they gave to accompany these causes included internal and external, controllable and uncontrollable dimensions. This supports the argument put forward by Russell (1982) mentioned in chapter 4 that research should not rely on the dimensional interpretation of attributions but attempt to measure the dimensions directly. The researcher interpreted results are in appendix H. They show different results to those shown here. This supports the view that researchers should attempt to measure dimensions directly and not attempt to construct dimensions from the causes given.
5.3 Attributions and gender

The questionnaire data was analysed to see if there was any significant relationship between the attributions given by the subjects and their gender. The results of the chi-square analysis (see Appendix H) support the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between the attributions made for either successful or unsuccessful events and gender. This result is consistent with the findings of Frieze and Snyder (1980), Wigfield (1988) and Marsh (1986).

5.4 Situations identified by the subjects

The categories of the situations which the subjects identified for doing well and not doing well are shown in Figure 5.6.

**Figure 5.6 Situations identified for doing well and for not doing well**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Did well</th>
<th>Did not do well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>159 (58.9%)</td>
<td>129 (47.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>111 (41.1%)</td>
<td>143 (52.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270 (100%)</td>
<td>272 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.149213</td>
<td>p&lt;.0075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The situations identified by the subjects were divided into two categories: situations in which the subjects were being tested and those which involved learning. The situations were coded by two individuals. There was 93.91% agreement and the remaining 33 situations were agreed case by case.

The fact that testing is not in fact language learning was noted. However, attribution theory emphasises the importance of the beliefs that subjects hold about events, even if they appear to be inappropriate to the researcher. Therefore these results suggest that for many of the subjects in this survey tests are a central part of seeing whether one does well or not in language learning. As a result, models of classroom language learning motivation may need to take account of this in situations where testing is considered a key indicator of success or failure. The model suggested by Dornyei (1994a:280) (Section 3.1, Figure 1) appears to be able to accommodate this under the learning situation level.

5.4.1 Attributions and situation

The questionnaire data was analysed to see if there were any differences between the attributions given in testing and learning situations.

No significant differences between attributions given for internal control or internal locus were found in either situation. Nor was there any significant difference for external locus for doing well. However, external control for doing well, external control for not doing well and external locus for not doing well did show significant differences between the situations identified by the subjects. These are shown in figure 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9.
**Figure 5.7 External control for doing well**

Question = Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control for doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.5%)</td>
<td>(26.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(68.3%)</td>
<td>(57.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't know</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.2%)</td>
<td>(15.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square: Pearson 16.55306

**Degrees of Freedom**: 2

Significance: p<.00025

**Figure 5.8 External control for not doing well**

Question = Could someone else have done anything about this? (External control for not doing well)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29.9%)</td>
<td>(47.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(55.4%)</td>
<td>(38.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.8%)</td>
<td>(14.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>21.79239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.00002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.9 External locus for not doing well**

Question = Is this because of someone or something else? (External locus for not doing well)
Chi-Square | Pearson
---|---
Critical Value | 9.6851
Degrees of Freedom | 2
Significance | p<.0079

Figures 5.7 - 5.9 indicate that the level of externalising is greater in learning situations than in testing situations. This might perhaps be expected as learners would be likely to ask for help while carrying out activities which are not under test conditions. Where subjects have externalised in a testing situation they often refer back to revision where they felt they should have had more help or were hindered in some way. A few subjects referred to distractions affecting their concentration during tests.

However, this data does not indicate that effort is any more important in testing situations than learning situations as was found by Frieze and Snyder (1980)(see Section 3.9.4).
5.5 Attributions and school

The data collected in the questionnaire was analysed to see if there was any significant relationship between the attributions given by the subjects and the schools they attended.

In the case of successful outcomes the results of the chi-square analysis (see Appendix G) support the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between attributions given and the school attended. However, in the case of unsuccessful outcomes the results for external locus and control and internal locus were found to be significant.

5.5.1 Attributions for unsuccessful outcomes and school

Figure 5.10 External Control and School

Question - Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control for not doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>115 (33.0%)</td>
<td>134 (46.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>120 (49.7%)</td>
<td>122 (42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>60 (17.2%)</td>
<td>32 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>348 (100%)</td>
<td>288 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square | Pearson
---|---
Critical Value | 13.246
Degrees of Freedom | 2
Significance | p<.0013
Figure 5.10 shows the subjects from school B tended, on average, to provide more externally controllable attributions than did the subjects from school A. Subjects from school B perceived 46.5% of all causes for not doing well as being externally controllable. While for school A this figure was lower at 33.0%.

**Figure 5.11 Internal Locus and School**

**Question** = Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus for not doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Locus</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(76.8%)</td>
<td>(65.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.7%)</td>
<td>(32.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>(2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>11.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.0034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.11 shows the level of blame attached internally by subjects for not doing well to be 65.3% of all responses for school B. While for school A this figure is 76.8%. On average the subjects of school A show a greater tendency to accept responsibility for not doing well.
Figure 5.12 External Locus and School

Question = Is this reason because of someone or something else? (External locus for not doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Locus</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(40.1%)</td>
<td>(56.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(54.8%)</td>
<td>(39.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.1%)</td>
<td>(3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square Pearson

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>17.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.12 shows that 56.6% of the causes of not doing well identified by subjects from school B had an external influence. The corresponding figure for School A was 40.1%.

Internal control when not doing well showed no significant difference between the schools which suggests that the subjects felt equally able to have actively influenced the outcome. The data presented in figures 5.10-5.12 suggest that the subjects of School A tended, on average, to take more responsibility for outcomes when they did not do well than those of School B. This suggests that the school or even the language department may have an influence over how learners see
the causes of events in which they do not do well. The application of attribution theory would suggest that the subjects from School B might be less intrinsically motivated to learn the language when compared to the subjects from School A.

5.6 Attributions and ability band

The data were analysed to see if there was any significant relationship between the attributions given by the subjects and the ability band in which they were placed.

In the case of successful outcomes the results of the chi-square analysis (see Appendix G) support the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between attributions given and the ability bands of the subjects. However, in the case of unsuccessful outcomes the results for external locus and control and internal locus were found to be significant, while internal control was found not to be related to ability band.
5.6.1 Attributions for unsuccessful outcomes and ability band

**Figure 5.13 Internal Locus and Ability Band**

Question = Is this reason because of you? (Internal locus for not doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Locus</th>
<th>High Band</th>
<th>Middle Band</th>
<th>Low Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>195 (74.7%)</td>
<td>167 (63.5%)</td>
<td>103 (81.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59 (22.6%)</td>
<td>89 (33.8%)</td>
<td>21 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>7 (2.7%)</td>
<td>7 (2.7%)</td>
<td>2 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>16.661</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.00225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.13 shows internal locus for unsuccessful outcomes with the subjects grouped into ability bands. The table shows that the subjects from low ability groups gave internal attributions for 81.7% of the causes. The corresponding figure for middle band subjects was 63.5%, while the high band subjects gave internal locus for 74.7% of the causes identified. This pattern does not suggest that the attributions depend on ability. However, since the relationship is significant, it appears that internal locus depends on the ability bands themselves.
Figure 5.14 External Locus and Ability Band

Question = Is this because of someone or something else? (External locus for not doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Locus</th>
<th>High Band</th>
<th>Middle Band</th>
<th>Low Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>104 (40.0%)</td>
<td>150 (57.3%)</td>
<td>55 (43.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>143 (55.0%)</td>
<td>100 (38.2%)</td>
<td>68 (53.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>13 (5.0%)</td>
<td>12 (4.6%)</td>
<td>4 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>18.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.00113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.15 External Control and Ability Band

Question: Is this reason something others can decide about for you? (External control for doing well)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Control</th>
<th>High Band</th>
<th>Middle Band</th>
<th>Low Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77 (29.7%)</td>
<td>122 (48.0%)</td>
<td>50 (40.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>142 (54.8%)</td>
<td>98 (38.6%)</td>
<td>55 (44.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>40 (15.4%)</td>
<td>34 (13.4%)</td>
<td>18 (14.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square Pearson

Critical Value 18.824

Degrees of Freedom 4

Significance p<.00085

Figure 5.14 shows the relationship between external locus for not doing well and ability bands. The ability band which externalises the most is the middle band with 57.3% of causes given having an external locus. The high and low bands externalised less by comparison; 40.0% and 43.3% respectively.

Figure 5.15 shows external control when not doing well and ability bands. The control perceived as accompanying the external locus in the case of high band subjects is 77 cases out of 104 (74.0%). This figure is 122 out of 150 (81.3%) for the middle band subjects and 50
out of 55 (90.9%) for low band subjects. This pattern provides evidence that perceived external controllability for not doing well may be related to ability. However, the middle band subjects provide the greatest incidence of external-controllable attributions: 48.0% of causes.

5.7 Attributions and teaching groups

The results from section 5.6.1 suggest that there is a significant relationship between ability bands and the attributions which the subjects made when not doing well. This relationship does not appear to relate, however, to ability but to the bands themselves.

It appears that the pattern of attributions for not doing well is influenced by some teaching groups. For example, external control for not doing well, which showed the greatest significance when analysed for ability band also shows a significant relationship when analysed for teaching group. Figure 5.16 shows the pattern of responses to the question 'Could someone else have done anything about this?' with the responses divided into teaching groups.
Figure 5.16 External control for not doing well and teaching group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Group</th>
<th>External control for not doing well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Pearson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td>54.4812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>p&lt;.0004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.16 shows that the pattern of responses to the question ‘Could someone else have done anything about this?’ is dependent upon the teaching group. The responses of the majority of teaching groups (eight of the thirteen) do not deviate greatly from their expected values. However, four groups provide evidence that the responses they give may be dependent on the teaching group. Groups 5 and 8 are both high ability groups from School A. Both groups have many fewer
positive responses than other groups. Groups 10 and 13 are both from school B and the responses they give contain considerably more positive responses than other groups. Indeed, these two groups provide the only two examples of ‘yes’ responses accounting for more than 50% of total responses.

This suggests that attributions for not doing well may depend on the specific classroom learning situation. In fact, the attributions given by individuals in the groups which externalised most concerned the teacher and aspects of the classroom environment.

Externalising was not exclusive to these groups. Indeed, possibly of more interest are those subjects who externalised but were in teaching groups that tended to internalise. These subjects gave attributions which were maladaptive in groups where the large majority of subjects gave attributions likely to lead to motivated behaviour.

Group 12 consisted of 26 students. There was little evidence of self-serving bias among these students with 12 of the students seeing both doing well and not doing well as internal. A further 11 subjects either exhibited a small degree of self-serving bias or showed a small degree of externalising. However, 2 subjects appeared to make quite distinct patterns of attributions from their peers.

Subject 240 gave reasons for doing well in a test as:

I remembered it from the lesson (internal locus)
I have a good memory (intermediate locus)
It means I listen in class (internal)
However, the same subject saw the causes of a classwork task in which she did not do well as:

- The teacher never explains (external)
- She never helps (external)
- She hurries us up (intermediate locus)

This degree of self-serving bias cannot be explained by the classroom structure in which the subject is studying as there is no other evidence of this pattern of attributions in the group. In addition, while she is clear in her beliefs about locus, she is less clear about control, not knowing if she or anyone else has any control over the negative outcome. No firm conclusions can be drawn about one individual from a questionnaire of the nature used in this research. However, I believe that the evidence is sufficient to suggest that this subject warrants further investigation.

Subject 249 discussed language tests for both doing well and not doing well. In both cases she externalised for 2 causes and internalised for 1. The 2 internal causes concerned revision while the 4 external causes concerned the difficulty of the task. This subject warrants further investigation due to the nature of these responses.
Group 4 was a small group of 8 students. 7 of the subjects follow the overall trend of generally seeing events as internal and controllable. One of the groups, Subject 61, showed a high degree of self-serving bias with all the reasons given for not doing well as being external and controllable by others. Again I believe that it would be useful to find out more about why this individual has made these attributions when the rest of the group have attributed differently.

5.8 Reasons for outcomes identified by subjects

It was mentioned earlier that the dimensions of causes should not be interpreted subjectively by researchers from the causes themselves. However, an analysis of the causes given allows for the data to be compared with previous studies in educational settings. Therefore the reasons which the subjects gave in their responses were coded to allow for comparison.

The reasons given by the subjects were coded independently by two individuals. There was 85% agreement in the coding. The remaining cases were coded case by case. However, 19 cases for doing well (2.8%) and 28 cases for not doing well (4.3%) were not able to be coded or were tautologous.

Figure 5.17 shows the reasons given for doing well and Figure 5.18 shows the reasons given for not doing well.
### Figure 5.17 Reasons given for doing well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External help</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task ease</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External incentives</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>718</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 5.18 Reasons given for not doing well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of revision</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of concentration</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of effort</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of external help</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mood</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absenteeism</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task difficulty</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of learning</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of enjoyment</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ability</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>652</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in figures 5.17 and 5.18 shows that 23.5% of reasons given for doing well were perceived as due to effort. This compares with 11.2% of reasons for not doing well being seen as due to a lack of effort. The attribution of effort is traditionally interpreted as internal and controllable.

Revision was given as the reason for 22.1% of cases for doing well, while a lack of revision was given as 16.8% of reasons for not doing well. This reason provides an example of the danger of attempting to interpret the dimension of a cause since the accompanying dimensions given by subjects included the whole range of possible dimensions.

The environment, which is traditionally interpreted as external and uncontrollable, represented 2.4% of reasons for doing well and 8.0% of reasons for not doing well. However, other external causes, such as, the level of difficulty of tasks and external help show only small differences between doing well and not doing well.

The reasons for outcomes identified by the subjects in this study were similar to the causes identified in previous studies in educational settings (see Appendix A). Indeed, this study reveals no attributions that could be classed as deriving only from language classrooms.
5.9 Summary

The data presented in this survey suggests that the pattern of attributions given for not doing well are dependent on a number of factors. Due to the complexity of this pattern it would appear to be difficult to make many generalisations. However, the data does suggest that the attributions for not doing well are, for the majority of the subjects, likely to lead to motivated behaviour in the future. However, there is a greater incidence of maladaptive attributions, which are likely to lead to non-motivated behaviour, for not doing well than doing well. This appears to provide evidence of self-serving bias. The data also indicates that the subjects in this study can readily provide more than one attribution for outcomes and that these attributions may be seen as having both internal and external elements.

It was found in this study that the pattern of attributions was not influenced by gender. It was found that when not doing well subjects tended to internalise less in learning than in testing situations. It was also found that some dimensions of attributions for not doing well were dependent on the school, ability band and even the teaching group.
5.10 The interviews

I shall now analyse the data collected from the interviews. The interviews were conducted with 16 of the questionnaire subjects tend to support much of the evidence presented by the questionnaire data.

The interviewees often mentioned test situations to discuss when they had done well and not done well. Eleven of the interviewees mentioned tests for situations in which they had done well while nine of the sixteen mentioned tests when discussing situations in which they had not done well.

Many of the interviewees saw the causes of the situations they identified as complex; deriving from both internal and external sources. This was evident in the questionnaire data and supports the view that attribution research should not search for a single attribution to explain causes.

The reasons given for doing well were generally either completely internal or considerably more internal than external. However, the second interviewee (Middle Band, Male), whilst internalising, did place great importance on the teacher as a factor in his success in learning German.
Indeed, when questioned about the importance of trying hard all said that it was very important with the exception of Interviewee 13 (High Band, Female). However, she mentioned that she did not need to try hard because she was clever:

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

J: Depends how good you are. Like if you’re not very good at it then you got to try really hard to do it, but if you’re good at it you don’t need to try that hard.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don’t?

J: Not necessarily. Because I don’t try that hard & I do well.

I: And you do better than some people who try harder than you?

J: Yeah.

It was noticeable that while the interviewees from School A tended to give intermediate causes for doing well (only two internalised completely), those from School B tended to internalise (only two attached any importance to external causes).
The reasons given for not doing well showed a greater tendency to externalise than those given for doing well. However, as was evident from the questionnaire data the incidence of internalising was still more prominent than the incidence of externalising. In general the tendency to mention more external reasons was greater for those interviewees from School A. The interviewees from school A continued to provide intermediate causes and those from School B continued generally to internalise.

This evidence contradicts that of the questionnaire where the learners from school A tended to internalise not doing well more than those from School B.

These findings do however, support the existence of self-serving bias. In ten of the sixteen interviews there was evidence of self-serving bias. However, there was little evidence of any interviewee feeling unable to do anything about an unsuccessful outcome. The exception to this was Interviewee 2 (Middle Band, Male) who in the case of learning Spanish showed a tendency to externalise. The evidence presented in this interview can not be explained using attribution theory despite the interviewee indicating that he was not motivated to learn Spanish. He explained that he did not want to learn the language. Attribution theory can not offer any help in trying to explain such a lack of motivation since an essential requirement of the theory is that the situation under review is one in which the subject wants to achieve success.
Few of the interviewees exhibited any strong emotions of the nature mentioned by Weiner (1996) (see Figure 3.6). However, Interviewee 05 (High Band, Female) showed signs of anger when identifying why she had not done well in a French Lesson:

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

J: I think it might be in my French lesson again. Because when we had to translate things that were happening in certain films I found that hard because some of the words we hadn't learnt & I tried my best just with the words that I know. But I didn't do as well because I didn't understand some of the words.

I: So the main reason was that you didn't understand some of the words.

J: Yeah.

I: Is that reason because of you?

J: I suppose, it's not really, because we hadn't learned them in the lesson.

I: Is this reason because of something or someone else?

J: Someone else, because my teacher hadn't taught us the words.

I: Could you have done anything about this?
J: I could've got a French dictionary. But I didn't have one with me.

I: Did other people have a dictionary?

J: I don't think so, no.
Later she continued to externalise:

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

J: Probably to do with me but sometimes other people, because if you missed a lesson they might tell you something not the whole of it so you wouldn't have done all of it or you might have done it wrong because they haven't explained exactly what you were meant to be doing.

Interviewee 11 (Middle Band, Male), on the other hand, appeared to show some evidence of guilt over his not doing well:

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

T: I once got a low grade in my vocab test. I didn't feel very proud about that.

I: Why didn't you do well?

T: I didn't revise properly for it.

I: So was it all your fault you didn't do well?

T: Not entirely but mostly me, yeah.
I do not believe that the evidence presented by these interviews provides much more than a validation of the questionnaire results. The evidence supports the view that subjects tend on the whole to internalise with the degree of internalisation greater for successful outcomes than unsuccessful ones.
However, I believe that interviews may have a place in future research if used after a questionnaire so that more can be found out about subjects who display maladaptive attributions at the questionnaire stage. I believe that this interview schedule could more usefully be administered to subjects from the groups where there was greatest evidence of externalising and to the individual subjects mentioned in section 5.6 who showed a greater tendency to externalise than other subjects from the same group. This would provide more information about those individuals who have shown the greatest potential to be lacking in motivation and provide. This may in turn help researchers discover if attributions have a role in classroom language learning.
Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this dissertation I have attempted to explore the role played by attributions made by learners at two English secondary schools in determining their motivation to learn foreign languages. In this the final chapter I shall summarise the findings of the current research and make tentative suggestions as to the implications of my research. I shall then tentatively suggest possible directions for further research in the area of attribution theory and language learning.

6.2 Conclusions

The evidence presented in this study appears to support the conclusions presented by other studies of attributions made in educational settings in 'western cultures'. Indeed, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that the attributions made in learning foreign languages are any different to those made in other subjects.
6.2.1 The nature of attributions made by learners

The evidence presented in this research appears to support the view that learners generally make adaptive attributions, which lead to motivated behaviour in the future. However, there is also evidence which suggests that a small number of learners make maladaptive attributions which are likely to produce non-motivated behaviour in the future.

The results of this survey appear to reflect the evidence shown in previous studies where self-serving bias is evident. I would tentatively support the view of Arkin and Maruyama (1979), who show concern over the state of research in this area (see section 3.9.1). I would suggest that if attribution research is to add to our knowledge of motivation then further research into the nature of self-serving bias is necessary.

This survey shows that the attributions made by individuals are not always dichotomous. I would tentatively suggest on the evidence presented here that any future research in this area should not assume that attributions are dichotomous, as has been the case in many previous surveys. I believe that researchers should treat intermediate causes, which derive both internally and externally, as valid responses. This would support the interactive view of learning mentioned by Williams (1994) which suggests that decisions to act, and therefore to learn, are influenced by both internal and external factors.

I would tentatively suggest that any future research should focus on attributions made for unsuccessful outcomes since it is attributions following such outcomes that attribution theorists suggest are most likely to produce non-motivated behaviour in subsequent learning. Significant differences were found in the questionnaire results when the schools and ability bands were compared. In addition, there were some differences between teaching groups. The differences exhibited in these results suggest that it would be premature to draw any
general conclusions concerning patterns of attributions. As has been noted before, by Buck et al. (1987), "attributional style is sensitive to variations between country, school and achievement situation". The schools surveyed in this study came from similar backgrounds, which further suggests, given the differences in the results between the two schools, both schools have excellent reputations with successful modern language departments, that attributions may be situation specific.

I would suggest that future research in the United Kingdom should focus on schools with lower levels of academic achievement where a lack of motivation is more likely to be evident. Furthermore, I believe that there is a need for research to be carried out in other parts of the world. There is little evidence of research into attributions in educational settings outside of ‘western cultures’. An indication of possible differences is provided by research in Israel carried out by Bar-Tal and Darom (1979) (see appendix A) which provides contrasting conclusions to most surveys carried out in ‘western cultures’. This point is emphasised by Lalljee (1996:136) who states that "Differences between societies are systematically related to the ways in which people interpret events", and Williams and Burden (1997:208) who conclude that "the cultural background of the learners will influence the sense they make of the learning situation".
The evidence to suggest that attributions may be a component of language learning motivation appears to be inconclusive and further research is necessary. The data presented in this paper shows that when groups were assessed a few displayed a greater tendency to perceive causes as external as a group than other groups. The evidence from these groups suggests that aspects of the classroom environments were causing these responses. I believe that of more interest are those subjects who tended to perceive causes as external but were from groups in which the subjects appeared to be motivated. In these cases it is not clear why the subject saw causes as external. If time had allowed I would have returned to administer the interview schedule on these subjects.

The data appears to support the view that individuals perceive the causes of success and failure differently. However, the causes given by the subjects were similar to those given in other educational settings and no causes were evident that supported the view that attributions given in language learning were any different to those given in other learning situations.

The models of language learning motivation provided by Dörnyei (see Section 3.2) both mention attributions as suggested components of language learning motivation. However, I would tentatively suggest that further research is necessary in order to discover the degree to which attributions are related to language learning rather than learning in general.
6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

On the basis of the conclusions drawn so far I would tentatively suggest that future research should use a questionnaire such as that shown in appendix J. This questionnaire surveys four dimensions for unsuccessful outcomes: locus, stability, controllability and globality. The evidence provided by such a questionnaire could give an overview of the patterns of attributions exhibited by subjects for unsuccessful outcomes. In addition, based on the assumption that the majority of subjects are likely to provide attribution that are likely to lead to motivated behaviour in the future, the researcher would be able to select candidates for interview who want to do well but have shown the greatest tendency to exhibit attributions likely to lead to non-motivated behaviour. It is these subjects who attribution theorists believe may benefit from this knowledge.
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Nicholls, J. (1978) "The development of the concepts of effort and ability, perception of academic attainment, and the understanding that difficult tasks require more ability". Child Development Vol.49, no.3, 800-814.


# Appendix A

## Research into Attributions made in Educational Settings

**Arkin and Maruyama (1979)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context:</th>
<th>Attributions of exam performance (subject as actor and observer).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method:</td>
<td>Questionnaire - 5-point rating of four attributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>18+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributions identified:</td>
<td>4 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings:</td>
<td>Successful students perceived internal factors as more important causes and unsuccessful students perceived external factors as more important causes of their own performance compared with the performance of the average student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bar-Tal and Darom (1979)

Context: Test results (subject as actor)

Method: Questionnaire - Subjects evaluate success on test and then rate on a four point scale the importance of 8 causes presented.

Location: Israel

Subject: Hebrew (first language), mathematics and Bible.

Age: Elementary school

Attributions identified: 8 - ability, material, effort, test, preparation, teacher, interest, home conditions.

Findings: Attributions made to success external and failure internal.

Nicholls (1979)

Context: Recall of typical success and failure. (subject as actor).

Procedure: Learners rated their own attainment. They selected from 4 causes for times when they were successful and then unsuccessful.

Location: New Zealand

Subject: Reading

Age: 6, 8, 10, 12 years old.

Method: Questionnaire - 4 causes

Attributions identified: 4 - ability, effort, difficulty, luck.

Findings: Developmental trend for attributions from less to more logical relations between perceived attainment and attributions. Effort and ability increasingly differentiated. Gender differences noted.
Frieze and Snyder (1980)

Context: Four hypothetical tasks (subject as observer)

Method: Interview - open-ended reasons for success and failure.

Location: U.S.A.

Subject: Various

Age: 5, 7, 9.

Attributions identified: 14 - stable effort, interest, ability, personality, physical factors, unstable effort, mood, task, ability * task, others' personality, personality interaction, others' unstable effort, other activities, luck.

Findings: Academic test outcomes - 65% of attributions = effort, 15% of attributions = ability. Art project - 27% of attributions = effort, 34% of attributions = ability. Situation specific attributions - testing situations perceived as most internalized and under internal control.
Little (1985)

Context: Attributions used to explain 6 classroom situations (subject as observer)

Method: Interview - open-ended responses.

Location: England

Subject: Various

Age: 5.2 - 14.8.

Attributions identified: 18 - performance ability, specific competence, general competence, previous achievement, effort and interest, motivation, time spent, others, task difficulty, behaviour, age, facilities, mood and physical state, domestic situation, speed, sex stereotype, personality, chance.

Findings: Attributions made to effort, interest, performance ability. Younger children were more likely to use performance ability while older children more likely to use competence, effort and interest.

Whitley and Frieze (1985)

Context: Meta-analysis of differences in attributions for success and failure, using 25 studies in non-hypothetical, non-retrospective events.

Method: Analysis of ability, effort, task and luck attributions.

Location: Various

Age: 5 - 11

Attributions identified: 4 - effort, ability, task ease and luck.

Findings: Success gives stronger ability and effort attributions. Failure gives stronger task attributions.
**Butler (1986)**

**Context:** Experimental (subjects as actors and observers)

**Method:** 3 experimental conditions

**Location:** Israel

**Subject:** Solving anagrams

**Age:** Average age 11.9 years old.

**Attributions identified:** 4 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck.

**Findings:** High social status attributed success to ability and failure to effort. Actors attributed failure more to task difficulty than did observers. Low social status attributed their own success to internal and external factors and failure to external, and differentiated consistently in their attributions for the self, for similar and for different others.

**Fontana, Williams, Simon and Ward (1986)**

**Context:** Real general academic success (subject as actor)

**Method:** Questionnaire - open-ended reasons for success.

**Location:** Wales

**Subject:** Various

**Age:** 18+

**Attributions identified:** 12 - study habits, lecture content, lecturer, ability, interest, social, motivation, domestic security, luck, peers, financial security, health.

**Findings:** Main attributions for success made to study habits (which includes which can be interpreted as internal-controllable), lecture content, lecturer.
Marsh (1986)

Context: Hypothetical success or failure (subject as actor)

Method: Learners rate 3 randomly ordered plausible causes (representing ability, effort and external factors) for a theoretical outcome in an academic environment.

Location: Australia

Subject: Various

Age: grades 5 and 9

Attributions identified: 3 - ability, effort and external.

Findings: Self-serving bias is greater for attributions to ability and effort than for external causes, more able students, those with a higher academic self-concept. Self-serving outcomes in mathematics and reading, particularly for attributions to ability are content specific. This suggests that these points are non-motivational influences on self-serving bias.

Buck, Clift and Povey (1987)

Context: Problem and non-problem pupils (subject as observer).

Method: Selection of attributions of success and failure from 14 possible causes.

Location: England

Subject: Various activities

Age: 15 year olds

Attributions identified: 6 - ability, interest, effort, task difficulty, luck, mood.

Findings: Evidence of what appears to be self-serving bias. However, the subjects were observers. Success produced more stable responses. Success is more likely to elicit intentional attributions. Main attributions (in
order) - effort, interest, and ability.

Chapman and Lawes (1987)

Context: Real exam outcome (subject as actor)

Method: Questionnaire - open-ended reasons for examination outcomes.

Location: New Zealand

Subject: English (first language)

Age: 16

Attributions identified: 9 - ability, previous experience, acquired characteristics, typical effort, immediate effort, attention, teacher, task, family.

Findings: Most attributions made to typical effort. Many fewer to the next biggest: ability, teacher help. The authors highlighted two groups. They observed that students who unexpectedly passed emphasised even more the importance of ongoing effort. They also noted that failing students who had their expectations confirmed, while seeing a lack of ongoing effort as the main cause of failure, more than other groups saw lack of ability and lack of teacher assistance as important causes.
Karniol (1987)

Context: Failing tests in liked versus disliked subjects (subject as actor)

Method: Questionnaire - open-ended responses.

Location: Israel

Subject: Liked and disliked

Age: 15

Attributions identified: 8 - test taking problems, test difficulty, lack of preparation, problems with subject, difficulty of subject, inadequacy of teacher, lack of ability, chance.

Findings: Attributions different for liked and disliked subjects. The more ego-involved the more test-specific causes given. Failing liked subject tests - 47% preparation, 32% test taking problems, 13% test difficulty. Failing disliked subject tests - 55% problems with subject, 39% preparation.

Whitehead, Anderson and Mitchell (1987)

Context: Real typical causes of outcomes (subject as actor and observer).

Method: Interview - rating 4 causes

Location: U.S.A.

Subject: Academic, social and leisure.

Age: Elementary school (grades 1-4)

Attributions identified: 4 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck.

Findings: Success more than failure attributed internally. No self/other differences found.
Wigfield (1988)

Context: Experimental task (subject as actor).

Procedure: Subjects listened to a story and then retold it.
25% = self-focus instructions, failure feedback.
25% = self-focus instructions, success feedback.
25% = task-focus instructions, failure feedback.
25% = task-focus instructions, success feedback.

Location: U.S.A.

Subject: Retelling a story

Age: Grades 2, 3, 5, 6.

Method: Interview - 5 attributions rated on scale.

Attributions identified: 5 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck, interest.

Findings: Attributions different for success and failure. Self focus/success gave more internal attributions for older children. Task-focus/success did so for younger children. In general, success was attributed to effort (also important - ability, interest and task ease). In failure only task-specific ability and task-specific difficulty were considered important but lack of effort not. There is no evidence of self-serving bias. Suggest more situational influences investigated.
Butler and Orion (1990)

Context: Perceived attributions of examination grades (actor as observer)

Method: Rating of attribution statements relating to outcomes (MMPCC).

Location: Israel

Subject: Mathematics

Age: 10 year olds

Attributions identified: 5 - ability, effort, teacher's attitude, teaching, unknown.

Findings: High and low achievers differ in perceptions of unknown control, but show similarities in perceptions of internal control. Higher unknown control for failure, which may be evidence of self-serving bias.

Hau and Salili (1990)

Context: Exam performance (subject as actor)

Method: Questionnaire - 12 possible causes of exam performance.

Location: Hong Kong

Subject: Chinese (first language), English and mathematics.

Age: 6, 8, 10.

Attributions identified: 12 - examination difficulty, mood, knowledge, intelligence, ability, own effort, wealthy/poor family, quarrelsome family, others' help, luck, teacher bias, calm/noisy home.

Findings: Learning oriented students attributed more to internal causes and performance oriented students attributed more to uncontrollable causes. High achievers attributed success more to internal and controllable causes while low achievers attributed more to external and uncontrollable causes. Older students attribute more internally than younger.
Dodds (1994)

Context: Experimental test (subject as actor)

Procedure: Manipulated results

Location: England

Subject: Spelling skills and puzzle solving.

Age: 11.8 - 14.7.

Method: Interview - 4 causes

Attributions identified: 4 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck.

Findings: Attributions for failure of poor spellers more likely to be for ability compared to good spellers. Both good and bad spellers are likely to use task difficulty to explain failure. General reluctance to use lack of effort for spelling failure. Successful spelling attributed to effort.
Skaalvik (1994)

Context: Attributions to perceived achievement in school in general and specific subjects (subject as actor).

Method: Questionnaire - 7 reasons (2 internal, 5 external).

Location: Norway

Subject: Mathematics and Norwegian

Age: Grades 6 and 9

Attributions identified: 7 - ability, effort, luck, quality of teaching, support and help, interest of school subjects, task difficulty.

Findings: Strong self-serving bias. Internal attributions increase with age; feeling more responsible for achievement. 6th grade attributed perceived academic results externally (60%). External attributions more related to particular subjects than general academic results; possibly because it is easier to identify poor teaching or task difficulty in specific subjects.

Gardner and Tremblay (1995)

Context: Essay writing task (actor as subject)

Method: Task and questionnaire

Location: Canada

Subject: French as a second language

Age: 17.8

Attributions identified: 4 - ability, effort, task difficulty, luck.

Findings: support for the view that attributions have an indirect influence (via self-efficacy) on achievement in language learning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context:</th>
<th>Assessment of perceived causes of being a good reader or writer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method:</td>
<td>5-point scale rating of 6 causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>grades 4, 7 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributions identified:</td>
<td>6 - effort, intelligence, enjoyment, luck, task difficulty, teacher help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings:</td>
<td>Differences in attributions of 4th and 7th grades for effort and ability lending support to developmental change - 7th grade rate them lower than 4th grade suggesting increased accuracy in beliefs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

The first pilot questionnaire

A language learning adaptation of the

CDSII-C

Learning French

Think of something you did in a recent French lesson. In the sentence below circle the words which best describe how you did in this French activity. Then finish the sentence to explain your answer:

I think I did very well / well / badly / very badly
because .................................................................

...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................
...........................................................................

Think about what you have written above. The statements below are about what you think of this reason. Think about the reason all the time and then circle a number for each statement.

The cause is something which I think:

1. is to do with me  5 4 3 2 1 isn't to do with me
2. I can control  5 4 3 2 1 I can't control
3. is permanent  5 4 3 2 1 isn't permanent
4. can explain things that happen in other lessons  5 4 3 2 1 can't explain things that happen in other lessons
5. others can control  5 4 3 2 1 others cannot control
6. is outside of me  5 4 3 2 1 is inside of me
7. can be different in the future  5 4 3 2 1 can't be different in the future
8. is to do with people  5 4 3 2 1 isn't to do with other people
9. is something about me  5 4 3 2 1 isn't anything about me
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. over which I have power</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>over which I have no power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. is changeable</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>isn't changeable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. other people can change</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>other people can't change</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. only happens in this situation</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>happens in other situations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. I can do something about</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can't do anything about</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. can only explain this type of situation</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>can explain other types of situations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Vlachopoulos and Biddle (1995)*
Appendix C

The second pilot questionnaire

Side A

Name:___________ Language: ____________________

Class: ____________     Age: _________

Think of a situation where you did well in a foreign language lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

Now say why you think you did well. You may write up to 4 reasons in the left-hand column of the table below. Finally, answer the questions on the right by circling ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t Know’ for each reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Is this because of you?</th>
<th>Is this because of someone or something else?</th>
<th>Is this something you can control?</th>
<th>Is this something others can control?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think of a situation where you didn’t do well in a foreign language lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

Now say why you think you didn’t do well. You may write up to 4 reasons in the left-hand column of the table below. Finally, answer the questions on the right by circling ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t Know’ for each reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Is this because of you?</th>
<th>Is this because of someone or something else?</th>
<th>Could you have done anything about this?</th>
<th>Could you do anything about this next time?</th>
<th>Could someone else have done anything about this?</th>
<th>Could someone else do anything about this next time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t do well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t do well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t do well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t do well because</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

The Third Pilot Questionnaire

Side A

Name: ___________________________ Language: ______________________

Class: ____________ Age: _________

Think of a situation where you did well in a foreign language lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

Now say why you think you did well. You may write up to 3 reasons. Write each of your reasons in the boxes along the top of the table below. Finally, answer the questions on the right by circling 'Yes', 'Yes, a bit', 'No' or 'Don’t Know' for each reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write your reasons here ⇒</th>
<th>One reason I did well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I did well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I did well is because</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Is this reason because of someone or something else? | Yes | Yes, a bit | Yes |
|                                                     | Yes, a bit | No | Yes, a bit |
|                                                     | Don’t Know | No | No |

| Is this something you can decide about? | Yes | Yes | Yes |
|                                         | No | No | No |
|                                         | Don’t Know | Don’t Know | Don’t Know |

| Is this something others can decide about for you? | Yes | Yes | Yes |
|                                                   | No | No | No |
|                                                   | Don’t Know | Don’t Know | Don’t Know |
Think of a situation where you didn’t do well in a foreign language lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now say why you think you didn’t do well. You may write up to 3 reasons. Write each of your reasons in the boxes along the top of the table below. Finally, answer the questions on the right by circling ‘Yes’, ‘Yes, a bit’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t Know’ for each reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write your reasons here</th>
<th>One reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this because of you?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this because of someone or something else?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you have done anything about this?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you do anything about this next time?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else do anything about this next time?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

A Sample Questionnaire Response from a PE Survey

Think of a situation where you didn’t do well in a PE lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

We were in a hockey practice and I was not doing very well. I could not pass the ball to my team mates or keep up with play.

Now say why you think you didn't do well. You may write up to 3 reasons. Write each of your reasons in the boxes along the top of the table below. Finally, answer the questions on the right by circling 'Yes', 'Yes, a bit', 'No' or 'Don’t Know' for each reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write your reasons here ⇒</th>
<th>One reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I didn’t do well is because</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The grass was too long</td>
<td>My boots would not grip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this because of you?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this because of someone or something else?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you have done anything about this?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you do anything about this next time?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could someone else have done anything about this?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
<td>Yes, a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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Appendix F

Instructions to teachers conducting the questionnaire

Questionnaire Instructions

Research into learner attributions in modern language learning

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. In order for the research to be valid could you follow these instructions carefully thus ensuring that all respondents have received similar input.

The research should be carried out in silence so that the pupils’ responses are totally self-generated. However, please emphasize that this is not an exam or test and that there are no right or wrong answers. You should continue as follows:

1. Inform the learners that you would like them to complete a task about doing well and not doing well in foreign language lessons.

2. Distribute the questionnaire sheets (one per pupil).

3. Use the OHT of the PE lesson to demonstrate the process that they should go through. Explain that the OHT shows a similar questionnaire completed by a pupil in a PE lesson.

4. Read the aloud what is written on the OHT. Then explain that the pupil gave 2 reasons for not doing well - 'The grass was too long' and 'My boots would not grip well'.

5. Now explain that the pupil thought for a while and then carefully completed the information. Emphasize again that there are no right or wrong answers but that the important thing is to circle the answers that represent what they think.

6. In order to help the pupils understand what they are doing I would now like you to explain each answer given in the example:

   ‘The grass was too long.’
   No - “This was nothing to do with me”
   Yes - “The groundsperson should have cut it”
   No - “How was I to know beforehand”
   Don’t Know - “I’m not sure about this”
   Yes - “The groundsperson could have cut it”
   Yes - “The grounds person could cut it”
‘My boots would not grip.’

Yes - "I should have remembered to buy some new studs"
Yes, a bit - "It rained before so the grass was wet"
Yes - "I could have bought some new studs"
Yes - "I will buy some new studs"
No - "I can’t expect anyone else to buy my studs"
No - "I don’t think so"

7. Now can you ask them to write their names if they were interviewed during the previous week, date of birth, the language they wish to write about and the language group that they are in.

8. The pupils should now be told to think about an occasion in which they did well in a foreign language lesson. They then write about it in the space provided.

9. They should then think of reasons for this and write them in the space provided.

10. They then answer the questions that follow by circling the answer that applies to them for each reason.

11. The pupils continue by carrying out the same procedure for the reverse of the paper, about not doing well.

12. When the students have finished please ensure that the collected papers are sealed in the envelope provided.

Thank you once again for your participation.
Appendix G

The interview schedule

Language Learning

Attribution Interview Schedule

Designed by M. Williams & R. Burden

Name: _______________________________________

School: ____________________________________________

Date of Birth: // Age: Years, Months

Class: _________ Boy or Girl: _________

Which foreign languages do you learn? a)___, b)___

How long have you been learning these languages? a) yrs, b) yrs

Do you ever speak these foreign languages at home? _

What languages other than English are spoken at home? __________

Can you speak any other languages? _________

If so, which language(s) can you speak? __________
1 I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

2 I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?

3 I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

4 I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

5 I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

6 I: What do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?

7 I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?

8 I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

9 I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

10 I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

11 I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

12 I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

13 I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.

14 I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

15 I: Describe them if you know them.

16 I: Could this describe you?

17 I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

18 I: Describe them if you know them.

19 I: Could this describe you?

20 I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?

21 I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?

22 I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

23 I: Are you clever?

24 I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.

25 I: What does being clever mean?
26 I: How can you tell if your clever?

27 I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?

28 I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

29 I: Why do you think that person is so clever?

30 I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

31 I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? (Even if they are not as clever?)

32 I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

33 I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

34 I: Why is that?

35 I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

36 I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

37 I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

38 I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

39 I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages? Why?

40 I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

41 I: What could you do to do better?

42 I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?
Appendix H

Full results of the questionnaire

Attributions and gender for doing well

INTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of you?) by GENDER

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Degrees of Freedom 2
Significance P<0.6504

### Attributions and gender for not doing well

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Degrees of Freedom 2
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### EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?) by GENDER

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INTERNAL CONTROL  (Could you have done anything about it?) by GENDER

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EXTERNAL CONTROL  (Could someone else have done anything about this?) by GENDER

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### Attributions and situation for doing well

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| Degrees of Freedom | 2            |
| Significance       | P<0.0622     |

**INTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something you can decide about?) by Situation**

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**EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?) by Situation**

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EXTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something others can decide about for you?) by Situation

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Attributions and situation for not doing well

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INTERNAL CONTROL (Could you have done anything about it?) by SITUATION

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ATTRIBUTIONS AND SCHOOL FOR DOING WELL

INTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something you can decide about?) by SCHOOL.

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<td>206 67.5</td>
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<td>Don't Know</td>
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<td>54 16.8</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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EXTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something others can decide about for you?) by SCHOOL.

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INTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of you?) by SCHOOL.

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EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?) by SCHOOL

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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 6.619
Degrees of Freedom 2
Significance P<0.0365

Attributions and School for doing well

INTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of you?) by SCHOOL

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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 11.3907
Degrees of Freedom 2
Significance P<0.0034

EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?) by SCHOOL

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<td>No</td>
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<td>118 (39.7)</td>
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<td>Don't Know</td>
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<td>11 (3.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 17.6011
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### INTERNAL CONTROL (Could you have done anything about it?) by SCHOOL

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### EXTERNAL CONTROL (Could someone else have done anything about this?) by School.

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**Attributions and ability band for doing well**

**INTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something you can decide about?) by ABILITY BAND.**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>181 (62.8%)</td>
<td>185 (66.3%)</td>
<td>91 (65.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57 (19.8%)</td>
<td>44 (15.8%)</td>
<td>26 (18.7%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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**EXTERNAL CONTROL (Is this reason something others can decide about for you?) by ABILITY BAND**

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**INTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of you?) by ABILITY BAND**

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<tr>
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<td>280 (100%)</td>
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EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?)
by ABILITY BAND

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<td>138 47.4</td>
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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 1.099
Degrees of Freedom 4
Significance P<0.8945

Attributions and Ability band for doing well

INTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of you?) by ABILITY BAND

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<td>59 22.6</td>
<td>89 33.8</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
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<td>7 2.7</td>
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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 16.6612
Degrees of Freedom 4
Significance P<0.00225

EXTERNAL LOCUS (Is this reason because of someone or something else?)
by ABILITY BAND

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Chi-Square Pearson
Critical Value 18.1957
Degrees of Freedom 4
Significance P<0.0011
INTERNAL CONTROL (Could you have done anything about it?) by ABILITY BAND

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Chi-Square Pearson

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EXTERNAL CONTROL (Could someone else have done anything about this?) by Ability band.

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Chi-Square Pearson

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Appendix I

Interview transcripts

All of the names used in the transcriptions have been changed to protect the identities of those involved. References are given in parenthesis when an interviewee refers to another interviewee or questionnaire subject.

The interviewee characteristics refer to:

School: A or B;
Gender: Male or Female;
Age: In years and months;
Band: The student’s ability band - High, Middle or Low;
Languages: The modern languages which the subject studies with the number of years spent studying the language in parenthesis;
Name: Name of the subject.

Notation and abbreviations:

*** = untranscribable;
.. = pause;
INTERVIEW 01

Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Gender: Male
Age: 13 years, 07 months
Band: High
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Jeremy

I = Interviewer J = Jeremy

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

J: Well the teacher normally starts by putting pictures on the OHP and we have to say what they are. We have to repeat them so we know how to say them. Then we do exercises from the textbook. She puts the tape in and we listen to it and write the answers down. Sometimes we have to go round the class and ask questions to other people and they have to answer.

I: So lots of different things.

J: Yeah.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?

J: I quite like doing the worksheets. At the end of each unit we have to do 3 worksheets, to sort of recap on the whole of the topic. I quite enjoy them.

I: You enjoy that?

J: Yeah, cause it's quite easy.

I: What aspects do you enjoy the least?

J: Probably some of the list exercises where we have to draw a table and listen to it. We have to draw a table out and put all the answers into it in different columns.

I: So why don't you enjoy that?

J: It's a bit boring.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

J: 8

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

J: Well I've had good reports for them over the last couple of years, so I'm doing quite well.

I: Is there a difference between the two languages?

J: Well we get taught the same way really.

I: And what about how well you're doing?

J: I'm doing better in German than in Spanish but Spanish is a little more fun.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

J: I'd say about 7 or 8.

I: What do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?
J: Answer, put your hand up a lot; so that the teacher knows that you're ready to answer the question. Then she'll think you're doing well. Give in homework on time. Things like that.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?

J: Well we have tests to see if you know the words and that. If you get a good mark out of 10, you know you're doing quite well and if the teacher says good when you answer something.

I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

J: I think you'd pick it up quite quickly. I think you'd know you were doing well because you learn it quickly. Some people don't learn it as quickly as others.

I: So some people know that they're learning it?

J: Yeah, they can say the words like easier, in a shorter amount of time than some people.

I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: Em.. I listen to what the teacher says and we practice the words and that, and we make vocab lists. So we have the words that we're using and get them right.

I: Are there any other important reasons why you do well, when you do well in foreign language lessons?

J: Em.. no not really.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

J: I don't know really. The teacher asks everyone a question and we all get to answer. She asks everyone so everyone gets a chance. But.. Em... I think I do well in most lessons.

I: And that's because you listen and you practice.

J: Yeah.. we all practice.

I: You gave one reason is that you listen. Is that reason because of you?

J: Yes.

I: Is that reason anything to do with anyone else?

J: I just listen. I don't have any other way.

I: Is listening something you can decide about?

J: No, because sometimes things are boring so I might not pay as much attention.

I: Is this to do with other people?

J: Well, I think the teacher prefers us to listen.

I: So, you listen because the teacher insists that you to?

J: No, she doesn't insist but she tries to make us quiet but she doesn't insist.

I: When it's quiet you do better.

J: Yeah.

I: You mentioned practice. Is that reason because of you?

J: Em.. No, the teacher always practices the words at the beginning of the lesson and for homework. So it's the teacher that makes us.

I: So if the teacher didn't make you practice, would you practice?
J: Probably not. Well, not at home anyway.
I: Is this reason something you can decide about?
J: Em., yes, I prefer to practice it.
I: But if the teacher didn't insist would you do as much?
J: No, I wouldn't do as much.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
J: Up to me.
I: Only up to you?
J: No, no, no, my mum and dad want me to do well and they think that languages are an important subject.
I: So if they didn't insist so much would you be doing as well?
J: Well, they don't always insist at home but I think the teacher helps too.
I: So is it up to you but up to other people a bit too?
J: Yeah.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
J: No.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
J: Em..., 8
I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?
J: No, I don't think so, you have to do well and you have to speak it clearly. You have to understand the words to do the work.
I: So is doing well at a foreign language more or less the same as being good at it?
J: Yeah.
I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?
J: Well, some of my friends can remember the words quickly, but forget and don't do the homework and get writing questions wrong. You can be good at some parts.
I: So there good at some parts.
J: Yeah, speaking and listening.
I: So they might be doing well in speaking but not in writing.
J: Yeah.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.
J: Probably English.
I: Why?
J: I quite enjoy it. We read books and do drama. I do drama out of school as well so I enjoy that. I think the teachers we've got are nice and helpful. And the work's quite interesting. We do quite a few projects.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?
J: Probably drama. I go every Saturday to a drama club and I've been going there since I was 8. So that's five years ago. So I think I'm probably best at that.

I: And you really enjoy it as well.

J: Yeah.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

J: No, I don't think it is. It depends on how difficult the work is and things like that. Some people may not be very clever but they're good at other things.

I: So the difficulty of the work is something quite important.

J: Yeah, I think if they find the work difficult or don't understand the work it might be.

I: But they could still be clever.

J: Yeah.

I: Are you clever?

J: Em.. People tell me I am.

I: If other people didn't say, do you think that you would know?

J: I think so because I get good marks for all my other subjects.

I: So is it easier to tell that you're clever in other subjects?

J: No, It's not always the work. If you put your hand up to answer questions all the time, that shows that you're clever.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.

J: About 7. I'm in the top band but I struggle with some things.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?

J: Well, it's the girls more than the boys.

I: How can you tell?

J: Well, they always answer the questions, they always have the answer to give and they always do well in tests. Things like that.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?

J: I think it's important because you've got to keep up how well you're doing and if you're behind a bit you got to try harder. I think it's very important.

I: Very important?

J: Um.. Yeah, I'd say so if you want to do well then you have to make an effort.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? Even if they are not as clever?

J: Yeah, definitely. If you can't be bothered to try then you're not going to learn much.

I: What about if the person who doesn't try hard is really clever and the person who is trying hard isn't clever? Will these people do better?

J: I don't think so. It doesn't even matter how clever you are. I think you've got to try hard to get the answers right.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
J: Try hard.

I: Is trying hard anything to do with being clever?

J: Well, you'd be clever to try hard but I don't really think they've got much relationship?

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

J: Probably the sciences, chemistry and English. Probably those two.

I: Why is that?

J: I don't know. I think English is a really important subject but I'm quite good at it so I try hard cause I know I can do the work. Chemistry I find quite interesting and we do experiments and stuff like that.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

J: I don't know really. I think it maybe could be a little more interesting. We do all the same stuff every lesson, not the same topics, but we sort of have the same routine every lesson.

I: Is that in German and Spanish?

J: Yeah, we always spend half a lesson practicing words and then we do some written work and listening work. I think it could be made a bit more fun. Then people might try harder. Some people find it boring; that's why they don't bother.

I: So, if they find it boring that's often the reason why they don't try hard. Does that happen to you sometimes?

J: Probably in some subjects.

I: In German or Spanish.

J: No, not in them. I think they're all right, but sometimes I get a little bored with it and I try a little less.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: If I hadn't listened when we've started a new topic, cause that's when we first learn the words. And that's when you pick up the new words the quickest. If I didn't practise at home or do my homework.

I: Does that sometimes happen?

J: No I don't forget to do my homework.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

J: I find the tests in Spanish a little harder than German.

I: Can you think of a time when you were unhappy with your work?

J: When we were learning how to say places like high street shops and banks and places like that.

I: So why didn't you do very well?

J: Well, because I didn't understand the difference between masculine and feminine names.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

J: I think we could've been taught a bit more about it. We do get told a little bit about masculine and feminine but not really enough.

I: Do you think you could've done better if you'd tried a little harder?
J: Yeah, I think so cause in Spanish we have to make our own vocabulary lists and not many people are writing down the words. In German we always write them all down at the end of the lesson. So, if I’ve written them down I could’ve learnt them a bit better.

I: So, the next time did you do that?

J: Yeah, well we’ve all started making vocabulary lists now because the teachers insisted on it.

I: What if the teacher hadn’t insisted would you have still not bothered?

J: Well we went to parents evening and the Spanish teacher told us that I have a little trouble putting sentences together and stuff like that. So as from then I started doing it myself.

I: So if the teacher hadn’t said you might not have done it yourself?

J: Yeah.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

J: I think it’s mainly to do with me really. I don’t try hard enough or listen.

I: So when you don’t do well the main person involved is you?

J: Yeah.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages? Why?

J: Yeah, for the future when I’m trying to get a job learning a second language is important really.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

J: Well in Spanish I could practice writing sentences out a bit more, that’s where I’m having problems. But I’m doing fine in German.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?

J: I thought it would be harder than what it is. It was a bit of a surprise when I went into my first German lesson and the teacher said there was to be no English in the lessons. At first it was a bit of a shock but it gets easier as you go along.

I: Tell me about another time you were really proud of what you did.

J: Probably last year’s end of year test. I thought I’d done well cause I’d revised long enough to know everything. The test itself was quite easy. It is a bit harder this year.

I: Did you do as well this year?

J: No, I done a little worse.

I: Was the reason you did a little worse because it was more difficult or you didn’t try as hard?

J: Probably didn’t try as hard this year.

I: Was it more difficult as well?

J: Yeah.

I: You say that you didn’t revise. Was that because of you or for different reasons?

J: Um.. Because of me. I think it was my decision what to revise and I didn’t really revise enough.

I: Could you have if you’d wanted to?

J: I did quite a bit but I didn’t have the time to do any more.
INTERVIEW 02

Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 3 months
Gender: Male
Band: Middle
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Liam

I = Interviewer  L = Liam

I: What part of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
L: We like sometimes listen to tapes and write down questions from the sheet. And sometimes she holds up cards and we have to tell her what they are. She makes us write lists of vocabulary.

I: So, which do you enjoy most?
L: Listening to tapes.

I: Why?
L: It's a bit more interesting because you've got headphones - better than listening to her.

I: What part of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the least?
L: Um ... think it would probably be writing vocab at the end of the lesson.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
L: 8 out of 10 for German and 1 out of 10 for Spanish.

I: How well do you think you are doing in German?
L: I think I'm doing quite well.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
L: Um .. 7 or 8

I: How well do you think you are doing in Spanish?
L: about 4

I: So you don't think you are doing that well?
L: No, No, I don't understand it really.

I: What do you have to do to do well in German?
L: We have to be able to pronounce it right otherwise it doesn't sound like it should. And we have to be able to spell it right. Um.. and just pick up the words.

I: And is it the same for Spanish?
L: Yeah, I think Spanish speaks too fast, it's all blurred.

I: So, is there a difference between learning the languages?
L: Yes, there is.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
L: The marks I get for the tests, vocab tests - she says the English and we've got to write down the German and we get them back a week later.
I: Is it the same for Spanish?

L: No, we don't have vocab tests - you just know if you're doing well or not, if you understand.

I: If you didn't have results from the tests in German, how would you tell if you were doing well?

L: If she's trying to teach you something in class and the times you can answer what she's saying.

I: If the teacher gave you no feedback at all how could you tell how well you were doing?

L: Maybe by helping other people when they don't understand.

I: Do you do that sometimes?

L: Um.. Yeah.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

L: Yeah, I did well in the end of year tests - I got something like 86% in German.

I: What's the reason why you did well?

L: I did quite a bit of revision and I understand the language - it's quite an easy language.

I: When you do well in German, what are the main reasons in general?

L: Well, I think our teacher teaches it well; she lingers on things that are difficult, whereas in Spanish she rushes past things when you don't understand it.

I: So you think the teacher is important?

L: Yeah.

I: Is trying hard important?

L: You've got to try quite hard - you've got to concentrate quite hard otherwise if you just miss a few minutes talking to someone, you've missed quite a lot of German when she's been talking.

I: Is it possible to be naturally good at languages?

L: Yeah, I think some people are I suppose.

I: Do you think you are?

L: I'd say I was quite good at German but I haven't really got the knack of Spanish.

I: Is learning a language up to you or someone else?

L: Up to me.

I: Completely?

L: I suppose it can be up to someone else if they don't keep you talking.

I: What about your teacher or parents?

L: Well, my parents don't understand German but the teacher is important. If we had a different teacher I wouldn't be able to know it as well.

I: What about in Spanish are you doing well in Spanish?

L: No.
I: Why?

L: In Spanish....Well, I suppose it's up to me and the teacher because a lot of people do understand Spanish but I never understood it from the beginning. So, I'm like really concentrating well....I do understand a few words and I do understand some of the worksheets but never a sentence.

I: Is that up to you?

L: Yeah, I think it is because of me.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

L: I'm good at German; not at all at Spanish.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.

L: about 8 in German and ...4 in Spanish.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

L: Yeah, I suppose so, if they have got the potential in them and they haven't really liked the teacher so they can't concentrate.

I: Does that describe anyone you know?

L: No, I don't know anyone really.

I: Could this describe you?

L: No.

I: How is it possible for you to be good at foreign languages but you don't do well in Spanish?

L: I think it's the way she teaches; she goes too fast and she doesn't understand things to go properly over them.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

L: I suppose... maybe...when it came to a test they revised everything that they'd written down really well. Then, after they just forgot it or something.

I: So that means they'd be doing well in the test.

L: Yeah, not actually in the lesson.

I: So the test is something that shows whether you're doing well or not?

L: Yeah

I: Does it show if you're good?

L: No, I don't think so.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.

L: Art.

I: Why are you good at art?

L: I've always liked it and been naturally good at it. I like drawing and I just like making things really.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.

L: Badminton.

I: Why are you good at badminton?
L: I've got good eye-ball coordination and I just think it's a fun sport.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
L: No, it's not important.
I: No?
L: No, it's all down to if you want to learn, not if you're clever, cause you can be really clever in maths but you don't understand German or Spanish.
I: Are you clever?
L: Yeah, in some subjects.
I: What subjects are you clever in?
L: Maths and Art.
I: In German?
L: I think so.
I: In Spanish.
L: No.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for being clever?
L: 6 or 7.
I: In German?
L: 7 or 8.
I: In Spanish?
L: 2 or 3.
I: What does being clever mean?
L: Knowing a lot about different subjects and you want to learn more.
I: How can you tell if you're clever?
L: From the grades in the reports at the end of term.
I: If you didn't get the reports and didn't have tests, how could you tell?
L: I suppose if you thought you'd understood the language and you found the lessons easy.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?
L: Catherine Hancock.
I: How can you tell?
L: Because she always gets the highest mark. She hardly ever gets anything wrong. She's always got her hand up and she always gets it right.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?
L: Very important 'cause if you don't try hard your not gonna understand the language.
I: Is it the most important thing?
L: I think the most important thing is how good the teacher is really.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? (Even if they are not as clever?)

L: No, some people who try hard can strain themselves and when they have a rest they forget something 'cause they strained too hard. The people who studied a couple of days before might do better in something.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

L: Try hard.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

L: Maths, physics, chemistry and art and technology.

I: Why is that?

L: Well, I think they're important and I'd like to be a graphic designer and I need all of those.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

L: I don't really know...Um.. In Spanish - a better teacher.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

L: Talking to people, 'cause I get more enjoyment out of talking than listening I suppose.

I: Is that concentration?

L: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

L: About 3 weeks ago in German, I didn't really revise for my test. I had a retest after school.

I: Because you didn't do well?

L: Yeah.

I: So why didn't you do well?

L: I didn't revise - I went out with my friends.

I: Is it mainly because of you or someone else?

L: Me.

I: Was that something you decided about yourself?

L: Yeah.

I: Can you think of a situation in Spanish where you didn't do well?

L: I don't know ... a small test where I got 57%.

I: Why didn't you do well?

L: I didn't concentrate in the lesson and I don't understand the language.

I: Is concentration because of you or others?

L: Oh... it's me.

I: Could you do anything about it?

L: No.. if I really wanted to learn it but I don't really need Spanish I don't see how Spanish can help me.
I: So you're not interested in Spanish

L: No not at all.

I: The other reason you gave me was you didn't understand. Is that because of you or someone else?

L: I think it's 'cause they speak too fast and it's hard to understand.

I: Can you do anything about this?

L: No, I can't.

I: So, do you feel helpless in Spanish?

L: Yeah.

I: But in German you can do something about it?

L: Yeah, like in German I can get on top of it.

I: Would anything make you try harder in Spanish?

L: Maybe if we had a better teacher 'cause most people say she goes too fast.

I: Is it important for you to do well in German?

L: I don't really think it's a necessity of life but I'd like to do well in German because I suppose I'd like to know another language.

I: And Spanish?

L: I don't think I need to know 3 languages.

I: Could you do better in German?

L: Yeah, I suppose if I concentrated more.

I: And in Spanish?

L: Yeah, I could concentrate and work faster and do my work.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?

L: Before I thought German was difficult because I'd never learned it before but now I find it quite easy.

I: And Spanish?

L: I thought I didn't really want to learn it because I thought the words would get jumbled with German. I sometimes speak Spanish in German lessons.

I: And now?

L: I really don't want to learn Spanish.
INTERVIEW 03

Interviewee characteristics:

School: A  
Age: 13 years and 4 months  
Gender: Male  
Band: Middle  
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)  
Name: Julian

I = Interviewer  J = Julian

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

J: We learn about ... We look at our books. We look at objects, ways and speaking, new words, ages, names, things like that.

I: Did you listen to tapes?

J: Yeah.

I: Do you work in groups?

J: Yeah ... It’s good cause we get to work in group and it’s a lot of fun.

I: Do you get to work together more in foreign language lessons than you do in other lessons?

J: Yeah.

I: Do you do things like projects?

J: Sometimes, we do things like posters and that and a bit of writing too.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?

J: Probably when we go on the cassettes. We can talk to each other and we can record.

I: Which bit do you enjoy the least?

J: Probably when we have to look on the OHP and we have to keep on repeating things over and over again.

I: Why don’t you enjoy that?

J: Well, it’s good the first time we get going but then it just gets repetitive.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

J: German about 8 and for Spanish about 6.

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

J: In German I’m second in the class at the moment. I got the second highest exam result.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

J: I’d say about 7 or 8 something. I’m not very good at ...  

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages? in Spanish.

J: Spanish I’m not so good at because I haven’t been doing it for as long.

I: So that’s an important reason that you haven’t been doing it for as long.
J: Yeah.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing in Spanish.
J: 6
I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
J: You need to be able to listen to what the teacher saying and do what you’re told to do. You need to listen to new things like how you speak in sentences ...
I: Is it the same in Spanish?
J: Yeah.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
J: Well you normally have to be told by the teacher if you’re doing well. If you’re doing badly she gives you pointers and things like that.
I: If the teacher didn’t tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
J: Em, I’d just have a look through my text book, look at new things learn that and then I’d ask my friends to test me on it or something.
I: So you always have to be tested to know if you’re doing well?
J: Yeah, it’s really helpful.
I: When you do in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
J: Well the teacher helps you a tells you your test results ...
I: Any other reasons?
J: People around you can help a lot.
I: So helps is something that you think is very important.
J: Yeah.
I: What else?
J: Probably encouragement from parents like if they want you to do well in a language. They’ll probably like give you more support.
I: What about trying hard is that important?
J: Yes, very.
I: Is that more important than the other things you said?
J: It’s as important.
I: What about languages ability, is that important?
J: You probably need to be able to speak it ... You need to be able to do quite well in German and Spanish ... Have to sort of know the languages. Before you even start learn something from the dictionary or something like that.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
J: Probably in last years middle of year test, when I got like 87%.
I: You did your test. And before you handed it in did you know that you’d done well?
J: Yeah.
I: You already knew that you were going to get a good mark.
J: Yeah.
I: You said that you revised a lot was that something you decided to do or something somebody made you do.

J: Well I knew I had to do some. But my parents sort of told me that I had to do a bit more.

I: If they hadn’t told you. Would you have done less?

J: Probably yeah.

I: You said it was easy. What made it easy?

J: There were some things, questions that I’d revised so I could understand what it was really ...

I: So because you revised you made it more easy.

J: Yeah.

I: It wasn’t because it was easy full stop.

J: No, it wasn’t that easy.

I: So to some people that test would’ve been difficult.

J: Yeah.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

J: It’s both, cause you need the support and if you try hard enough you can do well.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

J: At German yes. At Spanish sort of maybe I’m doing well, maybe I’m doing badly. It’s sort of in between.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are?

J: German - I’d say 7 or 8. And Spanish I’m not very pleased with myself in that. I’d probably give myself 4 or 5.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn’t do well?

J: Is that a trick question?

I: No, basically there’s no right or wrong answer ... I want to know what you think?

J: You could have someone like that say that they were doing well for themselves but compared with other people they weren’t doing so well.

I: Do you know anyone like this?

J: Yeah one of my friends who’s gonna be interviewed - Interviewee 04.

I: Describe him to me.

J: Well he always does his work quite well. He always gets it in order but em .. for some reason I don’t think the teacher likes him very much.

I: So it’s partly to do with the teacher?

J: Yeah.

I: But he is actually quite good at foreign languages?

J: Yeah.

I: Could this describe you?

J: Probably.
I: What is the reason for that?

J: Sometimes when I've been away I haven't had a chance to catch up.

I: Is that something because of you. Could you have done something about that.

J: Not really, because what's happened several times, is I come back after weekend and I find out that we had to have a test on the Monday. When I got back, so I didn't have a chance to revise.

I: And have you been able to do anything about that after?

J: Well I did ask for a retest in a few of them and I managed to get a retest in a couple of them, but ...

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

J: Em, eh ... I'm not sure really.

I: It doesn't come to mind anybody who's like that. That they're not good at languages but they're doing well.

J: Not off hand, no ...

I: Could this describe you?

J: It might sometimes ...

I: That you aren't actually good at languages.

J: Sometimes I'm not good at it and sometimes I am.

I: Is there any difference between German and Spanish?

J: Spanish I am not that keen on. I don't enjoy it that much. Probably cause I haven't done it for long enough. And for German I like it. Last year it was boring. This year it's got good.

I: If you changed it round and you started Spanish last year and German this year. Do you think it would've worked the other way?

J: It might have done but I'll never know.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?

J: Probably maths and sport.

I: Why?

J: Well in Maths I seem to get high test results, I'm quite smart at it and I'm the highest.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

J: Not always it could just be that someone, could not just be very popular with the teacher like I said before.

I: And it has an effect on them.

J: Yeah, sometimes but not all the times.

I: So clever can sometimes have something to do with it?

J: Yeah.

I: Are you clever?

J: Well I think I am clever. And my parents say I'm clever.
I: Give yourself a mark put of 10.
J: At the moment I’d probably give myself an 8.
I: Is it possible that you can get cleverer and less clever?
J: Yeah.
I: Can you be clever in difference subjects like clever at I think and not clever at another?
J: Yeah.
I: What does being clever mean?
J: You know more things, you know more than other people and things like that.
I: Anything else?
J: It could be that you might be older than somebody else might and you might know more.
I: So the older you are, the chances are the cleverer you’ll be?
J: Yeah, there’s a chance.
I: How can you tell if you’re clever?
J: Em, well, you can always get somebody to sort of test you can something, ask you questions and you might not actually know or things like that.
I: And if teacher doesn’t test you and your friends don’t test you. Would you be able to tell if you were clever?
J: Probably be in my report card, that I get every half-year.
I: We’ve done away with report cards how can you tell if you’re clever?
J: People can tell you, like your family might be able to tell you if you’re clever.
I: Do you always need somebody to tell you that you’re clever?
J: Not always, sometimes when you get ... I don’t know how to describe it though ...
I: So a lot of the time we can tell we’re clever, cause people tell us.
J: Yeah.
I: So you think it’s much more difficult to tell on your own that you’re clever.
J: Yeah, because you could just be boasting to yourself.
I: Do you need to compare yourself to other people to decide if you’re clever?
J: Well sometimes you do. But sometimes it doesn’t really matter to me how well other people doing. It’s what I’m doing at the moment.
I: And that decides whether you’re clever, it’s up to you.
J: Yeah.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
J: It’s probably a girl called Katie D. She got the highest grade.
I: How can you tell she’s clever?
J: She normally gets extremely high grades. She does extremely good work.
I: So can you see that can you look at her work and you can see that shows that she’s clever?
J: Yeah.
I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?
J: In anything?
I: Yeah.
J: Probably my older brother, he gets extremely high grades. He’s really clever and he helps me a lot.
I: So you can tell from him helping you that he’s clever?
J: Yeah.
I: Any other way you can tell he’s clever?
J: No ...
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?
J: It’s probably I’d say the most important thing if you try hard enough and you do your best. No one can say that you haven’t done well enough.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don’t? Even if they are not as clever.
J: Em, most of the time I’d say that people who work harder get the highest grade, cause, em ... We’ll actually what do you mean by trying harder.
I: Making a big effort?
J: Yeah, em, probably be the people that make effort nearly all the time. Because if they try hard enough em, they revise and do things like that then ...
I: Even if the person who doesn’t try is cleverer? than the person who’s making a big effort.
J: Well it could depend.. Cause say, they have some weeks to revise say like something like half term or something like that and they don’t revise. Then they could forget all about it clever people. And so they don’t really know.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
J: To try hard.
I: Would you say part of being clever is trying hard?
J: Probably cause you need to try hard to learn more and get better.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
J: Em, I probably try my hardest in something like ... Definitely German and Spanish cause they're one of the hardest things. Em, Maths and English.
I: Why is it that you try hardest in your 2 languages?
J: Because, em, probably because I’ve never done it before ... It’s something new to learn so it’s much more difficult.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
J: Oh, I know one thing that would make me work harder if my parents sort of gave me a prize, if I did really well a present or something.
I: You’re just had your test. So you would’ve done more and revised more if they’d have said, here $50 if you do well.
J: Yeah, definitely.
I: Would that work in other subjects as well?
J: Definitely.
I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
J: Probably a main reason is that in Spanish I don’t seem to listen as much, which is a bit disappointing.
I: So you don’t concentrate as much?
J: No, I don’t really enjoy it that much.
I: Why don’t you enjoy it?
J: Partly because we’ve got a strict teacher. It’d be nice if she was less strict. That’d make it a lot more fun and we didn’t have to do as much work.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn’t do well in foreign languages?
J: Probably when I haven’t been listening because she keeps on talking about the same thing over and over again. She’s been doing it for about 1/2 an hour and I’ve been sitting in my seat with the window open. And we’ve got our books open and we put our pens so that there’s just a bit hanging over the edge and try a flick them out of the windows. Eventually I got about 4 things out of the window so eventually she caught us all and we got into real trouble.
I: The reason you didn’t do well was because ... What was the reason you didn’t do well in that sit?
J: Probably because I got detention for it.
I: What made you flick pens instead of concentrating?
J: Just because she kept on going on and on about the same thing over and over again.
I: So, it was a bit boring?
J: Yeah.
I: Is the cause of that because of you or because of the teacher?
J: I’d say it’s part of both.
I: Okay.
I: Is there anything you feel you could do about that?
J: I could try harder to listen.
I: Do you think there’s anything that the teacher could do about that sit?
J: Well she could just go over it a few times. And not like 1/2 an hour.
I: The teacher does that every time?
J: Yeah.
I: Do you think there’s possible that the teacher could not do that all the time?
J: She could charge, but she hasn’t lately.
I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?
J: It’s mainly to do with me.
I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages? Why?
J: Yeah, cause I might be going on a German exchange or on a Spanish exchange.
I: What could you do to do better?
J: That's a difficult question.
I: I mean you're doing well in German but not so well in Spanish.
J: Yeah.
I: Well in Spanish, what could you do to do better?
J: Probably get a new teacher. And em, probably listen harder, work harder.
I: So there's a combination of thing to do with you but also other things that aren't to do with you?
J: Yeah.
I: Which is more important?
J: Things to do with me 'cause I can change them more easily.
I: Did you think differently 'cause I can change them more easily.
J: I do think differently now cause I thought it would be a lot harder than it actually was. Cause em, once you get actually into the speaking, then it's a lot easier. And I thought it'd be much more difficult than it actually was.
I: And that applies to both German and Spanish?
J: Yeah.
I: Okay, that's it. Thanks a lot.
Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 09 months
Gender: Male
Band: Low
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Philip

I = Interviewer; P= Philip

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
P: We do worksheets em ... We got a textbook that we use.
I: Anything else?
P: We speak to each other in the languages.
I: Do you listen to tapes?
P: Yeah.
I: And writing do you do a lot of writing?
P: Yeah.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
P: Listening to tapes.
I: What is it you like that?
P: You can see how it’s really pronounced if you pronounce it wrongly.
I: So you actually speak into the tapes?
P: Yeah sometimes we speak into the tapes and ...
I: And the least?
P: The writing.
I: Why don’t you like the writing?
P: I’m not too keen on writing.
I: What in general or just in ...?
P: Yeah, in general.
P: But there isn’t much I don’t like in German.
I: And Spanish?
P: It’s okay I find German a lot easier than Spanish. I’d say about 7 for German and 5 for Spanish.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
P: I think I’m doing okay.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
P: About 6.
I: So not really good but okay?
P: Okay yeah.
I: And you're satisfied?
P: Yeah.
I: And Spanish?
P: A bit lower about 5. I find speaking it quite hard.
I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
P: You've got to learn how to spell the words.
I: So how do you that?
P: We have in our em, textbook, we have a vocabulary page at the end of each chapter. And it's got like certain question and if you answer the questions ...
I: And do you do that?
P: Yeah.
I: And so that helps you to do well?
P: Yeah.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
P: By marks that the teacher gives you.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
P: I can't think of anything.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are main reasons?
P: A lot of revision.
I: And then you actually do well?
P: Yeah.
I: Any other reasons for why you do well?
P: A lot of homework, em, just really going over it.
I: So when you do that are you trying hard?
P: Yeah.
I: What about people that help you parents, teachers, friends. Is that ever important?
P: Yeah but em. My mum and dad can't really speak German, so ... The teachers are very good at languages.
I: So do they help you?
P: Yeah.
I: And is that important?
P: Yeah.
I: Some people say that to be good at language, you have to be naturally good?
P: No.
I: You don't have to?
P: No.
I: Do you think that you are natural at anything?
P: No.
I: You have to try hard?
P: Yeah.
I: Is the work difficult or easy?
P: Well some of it’s easy but em eh I’ve got trouble sometimes reading the little comments and the words are difficult.
I: When you’re having trouble can you still do well?
P: Yes I think you can.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
P: Last year when we did em ... In the textbook there was a piece about Fawlty Towers and it was in German and we watched the video and did some question or it in German and I did quite well in that.
I: Why?
P: I like the programme and eh it seemed quite interesting.
I: So that reason for doing well was that something to do with you?
P: Well I put a lot of effort into it.
I: Did you do that because you decided to or did somebody tell you to do that?
P: I did it on my own.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
P: It’s up to me.
I: Completely?
P: Well my mum and dad want me to do well so I do. But I also want to do well.
I: So if they say like come on Paul does that make you try harder?
P: Yeah.
I: What about your teacher and friends is it anything to do with them?
P: Not so much my friends, but my teacher’s.
I: How do they make you do well?
P: Em, well they just really tell you to do well.
I: Explain that a bit more?
P: Well they em, they’re enthusiastic.
I: And that helps you do well?
P: Yeah.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
P: Yes.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
P: About 7 - German about 5 - Spanish.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

P: Yeah.

I: Could you tell me how that’s possible?

P: Well, em, you revise at home, like for an exam. So you could do so much revision and then get in the exam and panic and forget it all.

I: So, they’re not doing well because they did badly in the exam?

P: Well not so much that, but there’s just so much revision and they like get like panicky and forget what they revised.

I: So that person’s good at French language but they’re not actually doing that well?

P: No.

P: Em, well it’s happened to me a few times.

I: Tell me all about it.

P: Well last year I revised, but as soon as I went in the exam I like found it really hard to concentrate.

I: Was the exam difficult?

P: Yes it was.

I: You’d revised really well and the exam was still difficult so would the exam have been easier if you’d revised even more?

P: No, I think I done as much as I could but ... 

I: And the exam was still difficult?

P: Yes.

I: And you’re good at French language?

P: Yes.

I: What about in class, do you sometimes not to do well?

P: Yes, like, 1 week I got a D for a piece of homework and then the following week I got an A.

I: Do you know why?

P: No well when I got a D the following week I made a big effort.

I: So the homework where you got the D, you didn’t try that hard?

P: No.

I: And did your parents say try hard or was that done to you?

P: No that was me mainly.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

P: No.

I: Why’s that not possible?

P: You can’t be not good at it and do well in the lesson. You either can’t do it or you can do it.
I: And even if you try really hard and you’re not good at it. What will happen?

P: You could be good at it if you really put your mind to it but if you can’t be bothered then ...

I: So part of being good, you can change that by how much you try?

P: Yes.

I: Describe them if you know them.

P: No.

I: Could this describe you?

P: Yeah, yes it would. At the start of the first year I didn’t know a thing. And I didn’t like it too much. But now I’m really interested in it and I find it really good.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?

P: Well I like my games lesson.

I: Why’s that?

P: Well my family’s very sporty I suppose I just follow.

I: Any other reasons why you’re good at sports?

P: Again if I put my mind to it I can do anything.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?

P: Again I enjoy going up the park and playing football.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

P: No, no it isn’t I struggle in other subjects but I don’t struggle too much in German. I struggle in Spanish. I find it really difficult to pronounce some things and history I find that difficult.

I: Are you clever?

P: No, not really.

I: What does being clever mean?

P: Someone who can do anything really.

I: What would you give yourself out of 10 for being clever?

P: Say about 5.

I: How can you tell if your clever?

P: You can’t really. Well you could by the marks of your test. But one test you could do really good and another bad.

I: Forget about marks. Any other way you can tell?

P: Unless some says it to you ... I don’t know.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?

P: Probably Kate D.

I: How can you tell?

P: Cause she gets A’s all the time

I: Any other way?
P: Well she got em 92% in her test.
I: And in a normal lesson. If you were just sat there is anyway that you can tell she's clever.
P: No.
I: Why's she clever?
P: I don't know.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?
P: It's very important because em if you don't try hard you won't succeed.
I: Are there other things that are more important?
P: That's about it.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?.
P: Yes.
I: Even if the person who doesn't try hard is very clever and the person who tries hard isn't very clever.
P: Well em, I'd say the person who isn't clever who tried hard.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
J: Trying hard.
I: Is trying hard anything to do with being clever?
P: Yeah.
I: What's the connection?
P: The person who's clever has obviously tried hard to be clever.
I: So part of being clever is trying hard?
P: Yes.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
P: Geography and German.
I: So they're the subjects that you're cleverest in?
P: Yeah.
I: Why is that?
P: I try hard in all lessons but I find it much easier in German and Geography than in any other lesson.
I: So you don't try any harder really ...
P: No it just comes easier.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
P: I don't know ... Giving out some kind of prize maybe.
I: Do you get that in other subjects?
P: Yeah, used to get it in German but not so often . It does make you try harder.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages in Spanish?
P: Again prizes of some kind.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

P: Maybe eh not putting as much effort in.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn’t do well in foreign languages?

P: This year I really did struggle on my Spanish exam. I didn’t do too well.

I: Why did you struggle?

P: Well I revised the things that I thought were gonna be in the test but obviously the things that I revised weren’t in the test.

I: So you chose selected things?

P: Yes.

I: And you didn’t do everything?

P: No.

I: Could you have tried harder?

P: Yeah, I think I could’ve.

I: What would you have done?

P: Revised the bits that were in the test.

I: Any other reasons?

P: I think I was distracted and em that’s about it.

I: The reason that you didn’t revise enough was that because of you or of somebody else.

P: Partly I was going out the next day. So I was probably thinking of what I was gonna do the next day and not my revision.

I: So was that because of you?

P: I think it was because of me. I mean I can’t blame anyone else that I done badly in the test.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

P: To do with me.

I: Completely?

P: Well it could be, my friends wind me up and distract me.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?

P: Em, well yeah, ’cause when you came down to a job that’s say like with a major company, you might need do speak another language.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

P: In German - no I don’t think so. Spanish - em yes, yeah I could.

I: What could you do to do better?

P: Well I could more away from my friend I suppose maybe put a bit more effort into the homework.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?
P: Yeah, in the first year I thought it was very boring but now I’ve changed my opinion I find it very interesting.

I: When did that change?

P: At the start of this year..

I: Why?

P: The teacher wasn’t very good last year. Well you can’t actually blame the teacher but em I didn’t like learn a lot but this year I’ve learnt a lot.

I: So you get on better with the teacher?

P: Yeah.
INTERVIEW 05

Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 10 months
Gender: Female
Band: High
Languages: German (2 years), French (1 year)
Name: Janet

I = Interviewer  J = Janet

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

J: Well we em ... Our Teacher teaches us some vocabulary that we have to do. And then we all repeat it after her and we write down lists of vocabulary in German and in English. Then she'll pick us out some exercise to do from what we've just learnt.

I: Anything else?

J: At the end of each unit we have these sheets. That we have to listen to tapes and work with partners to do them.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?

J: Em .... I think it's working with groups.

I: Tell me about that then

J: Sometimes we, eh, .... A few weeks ago we did holidays and we had to like a travel agent or a holiday programme. And we had to present it to the class in a group, about where you were.

I: What about the bit you like the least?

J: Tests.

I: You don't like tests?

J: No

I: Do you think about tests a lot?

J: Not really, sometime we have little vocabulary tests that are okay. But when we've done like 5 units we have a little test at the end and then when we've finished the book, we have a test.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

J: 8

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

J: I think I'm doing okay because em, I've done quite well in like end of year language tests.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

J: 8 or 9

I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?

J: You have to enjoy it really, because if you enjoy it, you don't mind doing work and it's good if the teacher makes it interesting for you.

I: So what do you have to do yourself?
J: You, yourself have to just try to do your best really.

I: Is that the most important thing, try to do your best?

J: Yeah ...

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?

J: Well when you do small tests you see how you're doing, quite well, if you are. And also if you can answer question in class, that other people can't answer, then you know you're doing quite well.

I: When you do in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: I don't really know.

I: Not sure?

J: No.

I: I mean if I was to say that being good at languages is a reason, would that apply to you?

J: Yeah, I think so yeah .

I: What about trying hard?

J: I try hard a lot. I try to make sure that I can do the work well.

I: So that's obviously something that's very important.

J: Yeah

I: Are there any reasons. Are your teachers, your parents or your friends important for how well you do?

J: Well my friends are important because if I was away, they could help me with what they've done in the lessons. Em, my parents they're just there, they can help me.

I: Do they encourage you?

J: Yes

I: What about the teacher, is the teacher important?

J: Yes

I: What about things like the work. I mean are you doing well because the work is easy or is that anything to do with it?

J: I think because I understand what I'm doing, I find the work quite to do.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

J: It was in my French lesson as we'd just had our end of year exams, the teacher had just marked it as she was calling our marks, what grades we'd got. And I did got the highest in the class.

I: Tell me, why you did so well?

J: Because I revised a lot before the end of year exams because I sometimes find French more difficult because I haven't been doing it for as long. So I felt that I'd done really well because ......

I: Wow you said you revised a lot was that because of you, the reason that you revised a lot.

J: Yes
I: Was it because of anybody else?
J: No
I: Not at all?
J: No.
I: Was that something that you actually decided in your mind?
J: Yeah because I wanted to do well.
I: Was there any possibility that you could have chosen not to revised?
J: I could've done if I didn't want to do well, but I did.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
J: Up to you.
I: Is it ever up to anybody else?
J: No.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
J: Not bad.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
J: 7 or 8
I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?
J: Well yeah, because you could do well in the class because you've just learnt something but then in a few days time you might not remember it. If you haven't looked over what you've done so they wouldn't do well in a test if they hadn't looked over what they'd done.
I: But they could still be good.
J: Yeah they could still be good in the lessons.
I: Ah, in the lessons, what about in general, if somebody was good at learning languages. Is it possible for them not to do well in lessons?
J: I suppose maybe they feel that they're a bit strange. They might feel it's not right to look as though you can do languages, in front of their friends.
I: Could that describe you?
J: Not really no, sometimes they laugh at me because I'm ... I revise for tests and things like that. But when it comes to doing the test I can do it quite well because I know that I've done some revision for it.
I: So part of their panic is to laugh at you.
J: Yes.
I: Does that ever make you think that you're not going to revise?
J: No.
I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?
J: Could be.
I: How could that be?
J: They could do well because they look through it at home and might have helps at home with their language. But in the lesson because they haven't got the help from members of the family. Then they wouldn't do as well in class.

I: So perhaps when people get more help then they can do well, but they're not necessary good.

J: Yeah.

I: Do you know anyone like that?

J: No.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.

J: I think, I'm quite good at English.

I: Why's that?

J: Because I enjoy it and I read a lot so ... I think that helps really.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.

J: Swimming.

I: Why's that?

J: Because I used to do swimming lessons and I like going to the pool every the weekends.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

J: Em, I don't know ... Because maybe they're clever and they can do the languages, well but you don't necessarily have to be clever to be able to do the language. Because you could ... You could just have help with it and the teacher there to help you with it. So ...

I: Is it more important to have help from people in language lesson than in other lessons?

J: No, it's just a general thing really.

I: Are you clever?

J: I think I'm quite clever, yes

I: Give yourself a mark put of 10.

J: 7 or 8

I: What does being clever mean?

J: You can do things well in the lessons. You can do your homework well and you can get things done.

I: How can you tell if your clever?

J: When you get quite good marks for your homework and tests. And I can tell people the answers in lesson times.

I: If you didn't get marks, how could you tell you were clever?

J: The fact that I can find something easy to do.

I: What? That perhaps other people find difficult?

J: Yeah.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?

J: I don't know. In language class it's Katherine H.
I: Why's she clever?

J: I didn't really know why she's clever. Because I share a few lessons with her. But she did really well at her end of year exam.

I: If it wasn't for the exam. How would you be able to tell that she was clever?

J: Because she can always answer the questions and ....

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

J: Probably my great uncle.

I: Why do think that person is so clever?

J: Well he sometimes can't remember thing that have happened a few days before. But he can remember right back to 1935 and he was able to tell us about cartoon's he'd watched.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

J: It's very important to try hard because if you don't try then you'll never be able to do languages.

I: Would you say it's the most important thing?

J: Yeah, probably.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? (Even if they are not as clever).

J: Not necessarily because they might think oh I'll do well anyway, so there's no point in just trying.

I: So why do they think they're gonna do well anyway?

J: Because they do well if they try hard, so they probably think that they'll be able to do well, if they don't try hard.

I: And do they do well, when they don't try hard?

J: Probably not.

I: So you think that the person who tries harder does better?

J: Yeah.

I: Even if the person who doesn't try hard is really clever?

J: Yeah, because they might think oh I'm so clever that I don't need to try.

I: And do they do well then?

J: No.

I: So even clever people have to try hard?

J: Yeah.

I: And somebody who's not so clever if they try hard they'll do better than the clever person.

J: Yeah.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

J: Trying hard.

I: Is there any connection between trying hard and being clever?
J: Well if you try hard you'll be able to understand more of what the languages is about and how to do languages, so you'll become clever.

I: So trying hard makes you clever?

J: Yes.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

J: I try hardest in Maths, because I find that really difficult.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

J: I don't know, I try hard in language lessons anyway so ...

I: Is there maybe I'd the languages that you could try harder in. I could try harder in French because I haven't been doing it for as long.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages? in German.

J: If I couldn't do to as well and if I hadn't been doing it for as long. I'd try harder.

I: Is it possible for you to try harder in these languages lesson?

J: Yeah, but ...

I: It's not necessary?

J: No.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: Em, maybe it's because I don't understand it, maybe if it was a question, I might not understand the question. I might be doing it the way I think it should be done, but it might not be the way the question wants me to do it.

I: Is that something that's down to you or down to somebody or something else?

J: It's down to you really, but you can always ask other people how they've been doing it, if you don't understand the way the questions been phrased.

I: So in that situation is that something you should do, do you think?

J: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

J: It might be in French again. We had to translate things that were happening in some films; I found it hard because we didn't know some words and I tried my best just with the words that I knew. But I didn't do well because I didn't understand some words.

I: So the main reason was that you didn't understand some of the words.

J: Yeah.

I: Is that reason because of you?

J: I suppose, it's not really, because we hadn't learn them in the lesson.

I: Is this reason because of something or someone else?

J: Someone else, because my teacher hadn't taught us the words.

I: Could you have done anything about this?

J: I could've got a French dictionary. But I didn't have one with me.

I: Did other people have dictionary?
J: I don't think so, no.

I: So you could've done something about it, if you'd had a French dictionary.

J: Yeah.

I: Could you do anything about this next time?

J: I could bring my French dictionary.

I: Could someone else have done something about this?

J: My aunt could've done, cause she's really good at French and I could've asked the teacher what some of the words were.

I: So the teacher could have done something about it?

J: Yeah.

I: And could someone else do something about this next time?

J: I could get a dictionary or I ask the teacher if she could teach us some of the words.

I: But someone else couldn't.

J: No.

I: Only you.

J: Yeah.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

J: Probably to do with me but sometimes other people, because if you missed a lesson they might tell you something not the whole of it so you wouldn't have done all of it or you might have done it wrong because they haven't explained exactly what you were meant to be doing.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages.

J: I think so because if you go to another country then it's easier to understand what people are saying to you.

I: And do you go to other countries?

J: I'm going to Cologne in summer with the school.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

J: I could probably do better but I think I'm doing quite well at the moment.

I: What could you do to do better?

J: I don't know ... 

I: If you think you're doing as well as you can, then that's fine

J: Yeah ...

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

J: Yes because when I first came to the school I wanted to do French because my brother and my sister did French so I thought I'd like to do it too. Then I could get help from the family. But there weren't enough places in the French class so I got German and all my friends wanted to do French as well. And when we got to German we were all a bit upset. Because we thought 'oh what's it going to be like'. When we got in there we had such a good time. The teacher was really good. So now we're doing French, we're glad that we did German first cause we really enjoy it.
I: Is there a big different between German and French?

J: Not really, I find French more difficult because I haven't been learning it as languages and because ... Just think it's difficult some of the words. They've got lots of accents.
Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 06 months
Gender: Female
Band: Middle
Languages: French (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Katrina

I = Interviewer   K = Katrina

I: Can you tell me what you do in your foreign language lessons?

K: In, Spanish we normally do em .. sheets and learn vocab out the book, and like say we're doing time, we have.. our teacher's got a clock and we have to tell her what time we think it is in the language. In French it is basically the same.

I: More or less the same, okay. Do you listen to things? Do you listen to tapes?

K: Oh yeah, we do that, we have a listening test after the chapters.

I: Right. What about writing? Do you do writing?

K: Yeah, Yeah we do.

I: Tell me the bit about foreign language lessons that you like the most.

K: I like doing like activities, where we have the book... speak the language...things like em.. sort of, you have to get into groups and stuff... you have to make up dialogues. I don't like reading it out at the end though.

I: Because you have to read it in front of everybody?

K: Yeah, and I don't like that.

I: What part of foreign language lessons, Spanish and French, do you like the least?

K: Well, I don't like speaking in front of the class.

I: Right.

K: 'Cause that confuses me and em.. I don't like sort of having to em... if she puts a load of things on the board and I don't understand them and she says write them down and I don't know what I'm talking about.

I: And you don't know what you're writing about?

K: No.

I: And you don't like that?

K: No.

I: Give your language lessons a mark out of ten for enjoyment.

K: Em, what both of them... em,
I: Yeah, French for enjoyment.

K: Well, we don't really do a lot of activities in French, so... 6.5.

I: So you don't enjoy it a lot?

K: No, but I prefer French to Spanish for some reason. Em, Spanish 8.

I: So you enjoy it.

K: Yeah, but I don't like it much.

I: That's strange, so what's the difference there? You like French more. What's the difference there?

K: But I don't like what we do in the lessons. We don't do much, we just sort of... do worksheets and stuff and it's quite boring. I understand it more.

I: Ah, you understand it more.

K: Yeah, I like it more 'cause I understand it more.

I: Why do you think you understand it more?

K: Well, I've been doing it for longer and, but, like when we were younger my, my brothers done French at school and they came home and tell me things and I sort of got to know it.

I: How well do you think you're doing in French?

K: Ok, but I didn't do too well in the exam.

I: Ok then, so a mark out of ten for how well you're doing in French.

K: Em... about 7, I suppose.

I: And Spanish? How well do you think you're doing in Spanish?

K: About 6.5.

I: 6.5, so not quite as well, but okay. Can you tell me what you have to do to do well in a foreign language lesson?

K: Sort of, have to listen to the way the teacher pronounces things and don't confuse words with other words cause some words sound the same and you have to sort of... em learn the vocab and stuff so you get it right and listen really and if you don't understand you should ask really cause...

I: How can you tell if you're doing well in foreign languages?

K: I just base it on what the teachers tell me but I'm not really sure.

I: You're not really sure. If the teacher didn't tell you, would you be able to tell?

K: Probably not, no.

I: Is there any way at all that you could tell?

K: I suppose before we had our open evening and stuff and the exams, I suppose I thought I was doing better in French, cause we'd had a little test at the end of units and I did okay in them.

I: So the tests, you can tell by the little tests how well you think you're doing.

K: Yeah.

I: Any other way that you can tell how you're doing?

K: Well, if your teacher asks you a question, I suppose and you get it right or you sort of understand what they're talking about. I suppose that gives you an idea.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

K: You learn it and understand it first and...

I: So what makes you learn it and understand it?

K: Em... you have to learn it and understand it ...

I: So how does it happen?

K: Em.

I: I mean, for example, I can say something like 'some people will say that they are naturally good at languages'.

K: I'm not one of them. Em I suppose just...

I: Some people say that the reason they do well is because they try really hard.

K: Yeah, yeah, you have to try really hard to do well.

I: When you do well, is one of the reasons because you try really hard?

K: Yeah.

I: What about the length of time. You mentioned before that you know your French well, because you had more experience of it.

K: Yeah.

I: Is it important how long you've been learning? Do you think, to how well you do?

K: Yeah, I suppose so, you've got to have some eh like know what the language is about.

I: You said that you were doing better in French than Spanish. Is part of the reason you're doing better because you've been learning it for longer?

K: Probably.

I: Probably, but you're not 100% sure.

K: Not sure.

I: Then what about help from people then? Parents, teachers and friends in your class. Is that important for when you do well? Is that a reason?

K: Yeah, cause even like in French, my friend sits next to me and it helps me.

I: What about how difficult or easy the work is. Can that be important?

K: Not always, sometimes.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well in foreign languages?

K: I was just sort of doing a Spanish lesson and we had these end of year tests and sort of only got half of them wrong and we got the test. Then after the lesson she asked us a few questions about it, and so I knew most of the answers and stuff.

I: So you did really well in the test.

K: Yeah, and I learnt it off by heart.

I: Is the reason that you understood it and that you learnt it off by heart. Was that because of you or was it because of somebody or something else, or a bit of both?

K: A bit of both. I wanted to do well in that test and the numbers test we had before, I hadn't really done well. I wanted to get something right you know.

I: So that was because of you. Was there a reason you did badly on the numbers test and why was that? Why did you do badly?
K: I suppose I got confused and I didn't know them.

I: Was that because of you, was that your fault?

K: Yeah I suppose so.

I: It wasn't anybody else's fault?

K: I don't think so.

I: And what about afterwards, what made you change? What did you do then for the next test?

K: I learnt it and got friends that were in my class to test me on it. Like if em, I didn't know one bit I'd go through it again and em, and practice it.

I: Did anybody tell you to do that or did you do it yourself?

K: No I done it myself.

I: You decided all that yourself.

K: Yeah.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

K: Well it is up to your teachers as well, help at home and stuff.

I: What is it mostly?

K: Mostly I think it's up to you really. Because if you want to get it right you've got to do it.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

K: I'm good at learning them but not good at getting them right.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you are.

K: How good at them?

I: Yes.

K: Em em about 7.

I: For both of them?

K: Both yeah, not bad but not wonderful.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

K: Yeah I suppose so, em, yeah cause they might like think, 'Oh I know all this I'm wonderful at foreign languages,' and they get like a test or something and then they say, 'Oh my God I didn't learn this.'

I: And what's the reason for that?

K: They didn't learn it and they don't concentrate on it...

I: So they didn't make the effort they should have?

K: Yeah.

I: Do you know people like that?
K: Eh, yeah, I think there's one friend of mine, eh, that she's good at virtually
everything but there was one thing that she sort of didn't learn it. But she
thought oh I know all this I learnt it in the lessons. And it came to the vocab
test or something and she got it wrong, cause she didn't bother.

I: Would that ever describe you?
K: Yeah I've done that actually yeah.

I: So you've given yourself a mark of 7, but sometimes you don't think you do well as
that.
K: Yeah.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't good at
it?
K: Yeah, I'm a bit like that I've done well in like Spanish, at the end of the year,
which I was surprised at...

I: So you were actually surprised that you did well?
K: Yeah, well like, I got an 'A'. So when I found out what I got, I thought, 'Oh my
God, how did I do it?'

I: And yet you don't think you're that good.
K: No, I don't think I'm that good, no.

I: But you think you're doing well?
K: Yeah.

I: How is it that you can be doing well yet you don't think you're that good?
K: Eh...

I: What do you do? Tell me your secret.
K: Eh I don't have one em, I just decided that I was going to do better in this than
my half year one and I got my head stuck in the book really and...

I: Did anybody tell you to do that?
K: No I done it by myself and my mum said I'd done well.

I: Did she insist you do it?
K: No, she just left me to it really and said, 'do you need any help' and I said no
and she left me to it. And when I told her my mark she said 'oh that's really
good' so...

I: Great and for example is your teacher anything to do with that?
K: Em no, not really, my friend's, not in my class and she always does really well and I just thought 'I'm going to beat her' but I couldn't beat her. Because in German she's done really well. But I decided I was just gonna try.

I: What, have a go?

K: Yeah.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in school.

K: Em... I'm pretty good at English at the moment.

I: Why's that?

K: I don't know. I like English. English is my favourite subject. Sort of, because we have controlled conditions and one of them is that two teachers have got to mark it, I got a surprise but ... My teacher marks it and when he marks it I got full marks. I was sort of, amazed. But then another teacher marked it and found something that was wrong with it and I got 29 out of 30. And I wasn't so happy with that... so...

I: Tell me something else that you're really good at out of school.

K: I'm not really good at anything out of school.

I: Nothing at all.

K: Not really, but eh... no...

I: There's nothing you do like a hobby.

K: I don't really do anything...

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages to do well?

K: Em, I don't think that you have to be clever to be good at foreign languages, cause it's different, it's not in your own language. So you sort of understand it and you go in there and...

I: So what you're saying is that you have to be clever to do well at other subjects or no?

K: Yeah, probably, but yeah you really have to be more clever to do well in other subjects than you do, to just do well in languages.

I: Are you clever?

K: I'm not really clever in my class, but you might call me clever in the year.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.

K: What? Does it matter or just clever overall.

I: Well first of all clever over all.

K: Eh, I can't be that bad, I'm in the top class for maths so, eh, say about 8.

I: So would that be different from French and Spanish?

K: Eh, could be. I'm not wonderful at foreign languages, but I'm not bad.

I: So give yourself a mark out of 10 for being clever at French.

K: Right, em, 7.

I: And a mark out of 10 for Spanish.

K: Mm, about the same.

I: What does being clever mean?
K: I suppose sort of doing well and understanding things and learning things...

I: How can you tell if you're clever?

K: Well, to me it's doing well in tests but I don't know... Doing well overall really, your reports and stuff, getting A's and things.

I: But if you didn't have that kind of information, like tests and reports. How could you tell if you were clever?

K: I suppose understanding it, I suppose.

I: So then you'd feel...

K: Yeah, sort of feel that you'd done well if you understand it in class.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? And how can you tell?

K: In my language class, em, Katherine.

I: How can you tell that Katherine is clever?

K: Gets everything right I suppose. If the teacher asks her a question, she doesn't get it wrong or anything.

I: Does she ever get anything wrong?

K: Not in languages, no.

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

K: Overall, well then again, Katherine. But then again one of my friends Laura is pretty clever as well.

I: Why do you think she is so clever?

K: Well, for me, asking Laura something eh... she sort of... 'oh you do this, you do that'.

I: Ok then, so she can tell you what to do in every situation.

K: Yeah, virtually.

I: And can you explain things to her?

K: Sometimes.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages how important is it to try extra hard?

K: I'd say it's very important to try hard, if you want to do really well.

I: Is it the most important thing?

K: Eh... mm... not always... You don't have to try hard... mm I suppose you do actually.

I: What is more important than trying hard?

K: Em, eh, I'm not sure.

I: Well then, let me ask you another question. If you've got 2 people, 1 who tries hard and the other who doesn't try hard. Will the person who tries hard, always do better than the person who doesn't try hard?

K: No.

I: When won't they?

K: Em, if they don't sort of understand it and sort of... I don't know really. In maths for example, I tried really hard and my friend didn't and she sort of got a better mark:
I: So why did she get a better mark than you?

K: Cause she sort of understood it in the first place and I don't always get it. I just sort of try and try... and I don't always get there.

I: So why does she understand it? What is it that makes her understand it?

K: I don't know.

I: She didn't try.

K: No she didn't try that hard, em I suppose she listens and stuff.

I: So did she try hard before?
K: Yeah I suppose she tried to listen and stuff and got the hang of it then when she
 got to the test or whatever it was.

I: Some people might say 'my friend didn't try but did better because they're
 naturally clever.

K: Yeah, yeah I suppose she's naturally good at it I suppose.

I: You really think so.

K: I suppose so. I mean she's always sort of understood it in the first place and got
 the hang of it.

I: And does this apply to foreign languages as well?

K: I think so, yeah.

I: So the person who tries hard would usually do better than the person who doesn't
 try hard.

K: Not always.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

K: I'd say try hard.

I: Trying hard.

K: Yeah.

I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being clever?

K: Em... Sometimes, but then again, like just for example, say my brother or
 something, he tried hard but he's not particularly clever.

I: Does he do well?

K: Mm... He has done yeah. He does quite well but he could do better. Of course he
 tries but he sort of gets there in the end.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

K: Mm, I have to try hard in maths cause I don't always get it and I feel that I'm one
 of the not so clever ones in my class. So to get to the top you've got to try hard
 to get there.

I: So do you want to look the smartest in your class?

K: Well I don't really care because then everyone takes the mick out of you.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

K: Em... Well really Spanish with the numbers stuff, I just didn't get them so I kept
 trying to get them right but I didn't get them right.

I: So do you think you can try harder?

K: Probably, if I really wanted to. I did try but I could probably try harder.

I: So what would make you try harder?

K: I'm not sure really. I suppose, like in French, I've done loads of revision like,
 compared to my friend. She'd done nothing and I did really rubbish in the exam.

I: So what are you doing when you revise? Tell me how you revise.

K: I normally go into the dining room. It's got a big table and I just sit there in
 silence really. I take breaks, 'cause I can't remember it all.

I: What are you doing? Are you trying to learn the vocabulary?
K: Yeah and I fold the paper in half and put all the Spanish, for example and then I try to remember the English. That's how I'd revise it.

I: What about grammar? Do you do grammar?

K: Eh... em... yeah...

I: But not much?

K: No not much.

I: If you do badly in foreign language lessons what are the main reasons?

K: Em, I didn't understand it in the first place, like when the teacher tells me I don't get it.

I: Could it ever be that you didn't try?

K: Suppose once or twice, but I normally do try.

I: What about help? Do you get enough?

K: Thing is I don't really ask for any help. I seem to do it on my own. I suppose maybe if I asked for help I might maybe do better. I always get confused if I ask for help and they tell me something different.

I: Is the work too difficult?

K: Possibly, maybe.

I: But the main reason is that you don't understand it in the first place.

K: Yeah.
I: What causes that?

K: I don't know, maybe... maybe in the classroom when the teacher's telling us things I get distracted.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

K: In Spanish. It was a vocab test again and it was numbers and she was calling out the numbers. Everyone else was sitting and writing them down and I didn't know them.

I: Why didn't you do well in that situation?

K: Em, I don't know really em... Suppose didn't learn them as well as I could've done and I was getting confused with the French and the Spanish. Maybe if I'd learnt it more, I wouldn't have.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

K: Probably cause of me.

I: Could you have done something about the fact that you didn't understand?

K: Well I could have, sort of... When the teacher gave us the stuff I could have asked her.

I: Anything else?

K: I could've learnt them more.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages?

K: Yeah.

I: Why?

K: I don't know, I want a good report.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

K: Yeah.

I: What could you do?

K: I do listen, but maybe listen more intently and take in everything that's said. And if I was stuck or something, to ask the teacher.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?

K: Yeah, yeah, think I did. But I can't remember... em... I was going to Spain and thought it might be more enjoyable, I suppose.

I: Right that was the last one. Thank you very much.
Interview characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 5 months
Gender: Female
Band: Middle
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Susan

I = Interviewer  S = Susan

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
S: We learn counting. We learn how to give directions in German.

I: What else?
S: We learn all the drinks & the food. And what to say if you're at a table in a restaurant. And what your favourite things are, like animals & cars

I: Do you listen to tapes?
S: Yeah, when you go on headphones.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
S: I like, em, figuring out what the German is. Like it gives you a sheet in English & you've got to learn what the German is a try and work out what it says.

I: Why do you like that?
S: I don't know.

I: Is it interesting?
S: Yeah.

I: Which bit don't you like?
S: I don't like when we have to write out. When we've got the sheets & you have to like write it all out again.

I: So you copy it?
S: Yeah.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
J: 8

I: And why don't you like that?
S: Cause it takes too long.

I: Is it boring?
S: Yeah.

I: Do you understand what you're writing?
S: Yeah, but it's just too boring.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
S: 8 1/2.

I: Is that both languages the same?
S: I prefer German.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages? In German.
S: Quite well.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
I: And in Spanish how well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
S: Not as well as German.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing for Spanish.
S: About 6 as well.
I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
S: Understand all the ... You have to listen.
I: Is there anything else that's very important?
S: Like put your hand up if you don't understand ... I don't know.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
S: My report and my tests and thing.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
S: From my test. Cause, sometimes, he, I do understand but I don't do as well, but this time I sort of really understand.
I: You said you can tell how well you're doing from the tests. Is that because the teachers marked it?
S: Yes.
I: If you can imagine doing a test. Do you know you've done well in it before you give it to the teacher?
S: I think I do, yeah. If I understand like, all the questions.
I: So usually when you get the mark back you think oh that's what I thought I'd get.
S: Yeah.
I: In a normal class how can you tell that you're doing well?
S: When I put my hand up & I get it right & she says very good.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
S: If I can get through it very quickly & I understand it.
I: When you do in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
S: I don't know em ... Cause like once I know what the German word is for the English word and I get it in my head & I sort of know it.
I: How do you do that? How do you do well?
S: Well I listen.
I: So if you didn't listen ...
S: I probably wouldn't understand the things cause you've got to listen.
I: So one of the main reasons for you doing well is that you listen?
S: Yeah ... I concentrate.
I: Does that mean you're making an effort?
S: Yeah.
I: You're trying hard?
S: Yeah.
I: What about help. Is it important that your friends or your parents or your teacher helps you?
S: If you don't understand something then yeah, then after you know what it is.
I: Some people say that some people are naturally good at FOREIGN LANGUAGE Is that an important thing do you think? Would you say that is important to you?
S: No, not really.
I: So most important is concentrating & listening, trying hard & a little bit of help you get when you have problems.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
S: Well one class I kept putting my hand up all the time & she sort of said something nice like well done Sarah at the end of the lesson.
I: What were the reasons, why you did really well?
S: I don't know, em ... I don't know.
I: In other lessons do you put your hand up as much?
S: No.
I: Were you in a different mood or something?
S: No, probably just an easier lesson.
I: But other people didn't find it easy, did they?
S: I don't know. I'm not sure, some people did.
I: That day you put your hand up all the time.
S: But I do put my hand up actually. But I just put my hand a lot more.
I: And you got everything right?
S: No not everything no
I: But you still felt you did really well.
S: Yeah.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
S: Me.
I: Completely up to you.
S: Not completely, cause if I need any help I need people to help me.
I: But mostly up to you.
S: Yeah.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
S: Well my mum thinks I am.
I: But you do?
S: I think I do well, but I'm not really good at it but I do okay.
I: So you think you do well but you don't think you're really good.
S: I think I'm like ok yeah.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are in German.
S: About 7.
I: And in Spanish?
S: About 6.
I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?
S: I think so yeah. Cause some people like just really get it in their heads don't
and they know what to say but they just.. they know what it is ... They want to
do it.
I: And, why's that? Why don't they want to do it?
S: Because probably some people might not like it but they know it. They know ...
I: They know the languages ...
S: Yeah but they don't like it.
I: And that's why they don't do well?
I: Do you know anyone like that.
S: No.
I: Could this describe you.
S: No.
I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?
S: I don't know really ... I think so yeah ... Cause, em, like they might ... I don't know.
I: For example could you think of a situation where somebody tries really hard in a foreign language?
S: Like my friends or ... ?
I: Or it could be you. You said before that you were doing well in your lessons but you weren't very good..
S: Yeah.
I: So that's similar isn't it. I'm not saying that you're not good, you're saying you're not very good. So other people perhaps are doing very well they're very good.
S: Yes.
I: What's the reason that you're doing well & they're doing well. And they're good & you're not quite as good.
S: I don't know.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.
S: Art.
I: Tell me why you're good at art?
S: Cause I like making things & drawing.
I: Is it interesting?
S: Yeah.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?
S: Horse-riding.
I: Why are you good at horse-riding?
S: I enjoy it and I get to know the things like quickly.
I: So you had to learn that. Now is it almost something that comes naturally?
S: Yeah.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
S: Sometimes yeah and sometimes no. At the beginning they might not know it but at the end they put so much effort into it they know it.
I: Are you clever?
S: Ish.
I: Give yourself a mark put of 10.
S: About 7 or 8.
I: What does being clever mean?
S: You just really understand the work like ...
I: So how do you really understand it. What makes you understand it?
S: I like it, can't explain how I like it but I just ...
I: So if you're clever it's because you like it.
S: Eh ... I don't know really.
I: Could it ever be anything to do with trying hard. Is trying hard anything to do with being clever?
S: Not always because some people can just be really clever & they just don't really try. They just know it anyway.
I: How can you tell if your clever?
S: When I get a good mark.
I: Can you ever tell in any other way?
S: Em, I can tell when I'm writing a & sort of know it & I can understand it.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
S: Kate D.
I: How can you tell?
S: Cause she always gets high marks.
I: Any other way that you can tell that she's clever?
S: She understand it. She always puts her hand up.
I: Why's she clever?
S: I don't know. I can't think.
I: Is it somebody at home or somebody at school?
S: I can't think.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?
S: Very important. If you try, like if you can't do it be able to do it.
I: Is it the most important thing?
S: I don't think it's the most, I'm not sure.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?
S: Not always cause some people just try & they just want understand it. And other people they just know it anyway.
I: Do you know people like that?
S: No.
I: Do you know people that really try and don't do well?
S: No.
I: So normally, almost people who try hard do better than people who don't.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
S: To try hard.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
S: Art, German, Biology & English.
I: Why is that?
S: I don't know I'm not sure. You have to do well to get a job when you're older.
I: Does anybody tell you to try hard?
S: No.
I: You decide to do it yourself?
S: Yeah.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
S: I don't know.
I: And in Spanish.
S: I can't think of anything.
I: Do you think you're trying your hardest?
S: No, not my hardest, I don't know. I try to ...
I: So you're trying?
S: Yeah.
I: But you think it's possible for you to try harder?
S: Yeah.
I: Do you want to try harder?
S: Yeah.
I: You do? So how do you try harder?
S: I just listen me. I try quite a lot now but like in the first year I didn't really think it was that important, but now, when you get nearer the GCSEs you realise it is quite important.
I: So part of the reason that you're trying harder now is because you think it's more important?
S: Yeah.
I: You think, you could try harder, so how could you?
S: Always get my homework done. I do it, it's just that I forget to bring it with me & I get trouble for forgetting.
I: So perhaps organize.
S: Yeah, a list or something.
I: Do you think you'll do that?
S: Yes.
I: So, when are you going to start?
S: I've been doing it.

I: And has it been working?

S: Yes.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

S: Maybe I felt ill or something or I just don't want to listen or ... I don't know.

I: Any other reasons? Sometimes you don't try your best?

S: No, not always.

I: Why don't you always try your best?

S: I just get bored sometimes.

I: In Spanish, you've only been learning it a year. Is a reason maybe that you haven't been learning it long enough.

S: Well I know it now, it was just when I first started.

I: So that's not a problem then.

S: No.

I: Is it sometimes too difficult?

S: No, I find it quite easy.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

S: Well I think that in Spanish the words, like my tests, sometimes I don't do as well in them.

I: Why didn't you do well?

S: Probably I didn't revise as hard as I could.

I: Is that the reason?

S: Well it might be yes.

I: Might be, could there be other reasons?

S: I can't think of any.

I: The reason that you didn't revise as well as you could that because of you or is that because of someone else.

S: Sometimes I think I'll get it right but sometimes I think I'll better revise just in case.

I: But is it because of you that sometimes you don't revise?

S: Yeah.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

S: Sometimes it might be my friend or something distracting me.

I: And it's difficult to concentrate?

S: Yeah.

I: So that's more somebody else fault?
S: Yes.
I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?
S: Quite important, cause if you want a job to do with Spanish or German like you'll get one if you're really good.
I: Could you do better in foreign languages?
S: I don't know, I'm doing quite well in German in just Spanish. I could do a little bit better.
I: What could you do to do better?
S: Listen a bit more, cause I speak to my friends, sometimes.
I: Is that your friends fault or is that your fault?
S: My fault but sometimes my friend talks to me.
I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?
S: Yeah I thought, they were really hard but now I think they're quite easy.
I: Any other changes?
S: Not I can't think of any.
Interviewee characteristics:

School: A
Age: 13 years and 04 months
Gender: Female
Band: Low
Languages: German (2 years), Spanish (1 year)
Name: Amanda

I = Interviewer; A= Amanda

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
A: Usually do work from the book and sometimes worksheets and listen to cassettes and do orals.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment?
A: 9 for German and Spanish 1.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
A: German 7 or 8, Spanish 1 or 2.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
A: Because of the marks.

I: Any other way?
A: No, I don't think so.

I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are main reasons?
A: Cause I try hard, bit to do with my friends and my teachers.

I: Do you think that people are naturally good at languages?
A: No.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
A: Yes the orals last year. Well we were asked what our name was and how to spell it in German and like easier questions, like when our birthday was. Whereas this year you learn more and the questions are harder and it's sometimes difficult to understand what the teacher's going on about when we're doing the oral.

I: So what were the reasons why you did really well?
A: Cause I tried my best and I did a lot of revision and worked really hard.

I: Any other reasons?
A: No.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
A: It's up to us to do it not up to anyone else.

I: Not at all?
A: No, well maybe friends and teachers but it's mostly up to us.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
A: I think I'm alright.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are in German.
A: About 7 or 8.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are in Spanish.

A: 1 or 2.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

A: Yeah.

I: Describe them if you know them.

A: Well yeah, I know someone but I can't cause describe them cause I'm not in most of their lessons.

I: Tell me what you know about this person?

A: Used to be my friend at primary school so she does quite well in most of her subjects but she's better at like doing French language than other subjects she gets better marks.

I: Is she doing well?

A: Yeah.

I: So you can think of a situation where someone was good at French language but they weren't doing well?

A: They're like really good at the speaking and that but when it came to the writing they weren't very good.

I: So somebody's good at one part but not very good at the other part?

A: Yeah.

I: Why's that?

A: I don't know.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

A: Yeah.

I: Can you describe anyone like that?.

A: Well me.

I: So you're actually doing well?

A: I'm doing well in German.

I: But you don't think you're actually very good at it?

A: Not exactly, although I get really good marks I still don't think I'm very good at it.

I: So how's it possible for you to do well but not actually be very good at it?

A: Cause I just keep putting myself down. Even if I like came second in class. I just keep putting myself down thinking I'm the worst they could be.

I: What does that make you do then?

A: Just like my revising harder and working harder to get better marks.

I: So you just keep trying harder and harder?

A: Yeah.
I: So you think that you're doing well in German but do you think you're very good at it.
A: I don't think that I am but my friends say that I am.
I: So why do they think you are good and you think you're not good?
A: They think that I'm good cause they think that they're not but ... So they keep saying I'm really good at German and I go I'm not.
I: So how do they think you're really good? What tells them?
A: By the marks I think.
I: And how do you think that you're not very good?
A: Cause I don't always get what I'd like to get and I'd like to get even higher.
I: Is that because you want to do better at German or is that because you want to be first in the class?
A: Cause I'd like to get better at German.
I: You're not doing very well at Spanish, but are you good at Spanish?
A: No.
I: So why's that?
A: Because you have to memorize some words and I just can't say some of the words in Spanish. They're really hard.
I: So there's a difference between the two languages - you think?
A: Yeah.
I: If you'd have done Spanish first and German second, would it still be the same?
A: I think it would've still been the same because like German's completely different to Spanish. Whereas if you did French and Spanish it wouldn't have mattered cause they sound the same.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?
A: Em, biology.
I: Why's that?
A: Cause I get good marks for class work and good test results.
I: Is that because you make an effort?
A: Yeah I revise a lot and make an effort.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.
A: Swimming.
I: Why?
A: Cause I enjoy it and I try to make myself do it and I know I won't down or anything cause I'm a good swimmer.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
A: No.
I: Not at all?
A: No.
I: Are you clever?
A: Kind of ...
I: What does being clever mean?
A: I don't know ... To me it's just a word. It's like you're quite good at something or really good at something that you enjoy doing.
I: Is there at difference between being good at something and being clever at it?
A: I don't think there is.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.
A: About 5.
I: Is it possible to be clever at one thing and not clever at something else?
A: I think it is. Depends how much you like the subject.
I: So how clever are you at German?
A: About 6 or 7 and Spanish 2 or 3.
I: How can you tell if your clever?
A: By your grades and how well you get on in the subject.
I: What about in a lesson how would you be able to tell who the clever person was?
A: By the amount of times they put up their hand and get the correct answer or something.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?
A: That's hard. Cause all the boys say it's me and my friend Katie D. But I don't really know.
I: How can you tell that Katie's cleverest?
A: Cause she always puts her hand up to answer questions and she gets good marks and good grades for her work and that she's just ...
I: Why's she clever?
A: I don't know anyone cleverer really.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?
A: Em, you have to practice with your friends if they do the same language as you and just try your hardest.
I: So it's very important?
A: Yeah.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? Even if they are not as clever?
A: Sometimes.
I: When don't they?
A: Sometimes in other subjects that they're not very good at. Like e.g. Maths some people aren't very good at it but they try their best to understand it.
I: But they still don't do as well as some people who aren't actually trying?
A: Yeah.
I: So why's that?
A: Probably cause like they listen but they just don't try hard as everybody else but they still get better marks.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
A: Try hard.

I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being clever?
A: Em, I don't think there is.

I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being good at a language?
A: Yeah.

I: What is it?
A: I think like you try hard to get good at a language.

I: So the way to get good is to try hard?
A: Yeah.

I: Nobody gives into their first French language lesson and they're already going to be good.
A: No, they have to try hard.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
A: Biology and German.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
A: In German - no I think you can just try us hard as you think you can.

I: And Spanish?
A: Putting my hand up to answer question more in class even if they're wrong.

I: So you think you should put up your hand even if you're wrong?
A: Yes to take a guess.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
A: Cause you're not put your hand up. You haven't done well cause you haven't been listening or paying attention.

I: So again it's all trying hard?
A: Yeah.

I: Could it be because something's too difficult?
A: Yeah could be.

I: Sometimes for you?
A: Yeah, in Spanish.

I: And is there anything you can do about that?
A: Just try and like take more commitment in classes. Like by putting your hand up and answering questions.

I: And that could make it easier?
A: Yeah.
I: Perhaps a reason could be that you don't get enough help from friends, teachers or parents when you don't do well could that be a reason?

A: Could be from like parents sometimes teachers.

I: Sometimes don't your parents give you enough help?

A: Yeah, especially in French language cause my mum can't speak any.

I: Ah, so they can't it's not that they don't, cause they can't give you help?

I: And your teachers?

A: Sometimes it depends like how the lesson's gone.

I: What about not learning language enough. You've only been learning Spanish for 1 year is that sometimes why you don't do well?

A: Sometimes yeah.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages in Spanish?

A: My half-year exam.

I: Why?

A: I don't think I did well cause some of the questions were really hard and I'd only been doing the subject for 1/2 a year so I didn't quite know.

I: Could you have made more effort?

A: I think I could. If I'd revised just that little bit more for it.

I: And did you revise a lot for it?

A: I'd revised a lot and thought well if I don't get the mark, I don't get it.

I: What was the main reason you didn't do well?

A: I think it was because it was at the beginning of the year and I thought I don't like this subject. I'll just give up on it completely and forget all about it.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

A: Think it's probably me.

I: Anything to do with other people?

A: No.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages.

A: No I don't think it is. Just try your best.

I: Would you choose to do French language if the school gave you a choice?

A: Yeah.

I: Why would you learn German?

A: Cause it's a challenge to learn a difficult language apart from English.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

A: I think I could do a little bit better.

I: What could you do to do better?
A: Try harder and do my best.

I: Could you do better in foreign language in Spanish?

A: I don't really want to but I try.

I: So how and what?

A: Try to put my hand up more in class - by asking questions and revising even when you haven't got a test.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

A: Yeah, I thought they'd be really hard - that and you wouldn't be able to get used to the language. And I didn't really want to do it. But last year when I got started I really got into German and I thought oh I really like this.

I: So you like German try hard and do fairly well?

A: Yes.

I: And Spanish?

A: I don't like it and it's difficult.
Interviewee characteristics:

School: B
Age: 13 years and 09 months
Gender: Male
Band: High
Languages: French (3 years), German (2 years)
Name: Anthony

I = Interviewer; A= Anthony

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
A: Well we’ve done all sorts of subjects like shops in town and rooms and just all sort of different subjects. Ages ago we did pets, I think and all sort of things. We do it subject at a time. Like recycling and all sort of things.

I: What skills do you practice?
A: Well we learn writing, we also do speaking tasks and we sometimes do little sketches in front of the class and they’re always corrected, when it’s like wrong so we can learn the skills we’re doing.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
A: I like doing sketches and stuff cause it adds a bit of ... You can go, well not wild, but you know you can add extra little things like make up little lines. And so you can add extra little as well as what you’re doing.

I: And the least?
A: Copying up vocabulary into our vocabulary books, cause it takes too long.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment in German.
A: 8.

I: And French?
A: 7.

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
A: I’m finding French easier at the moment cause I’ve been like doing French for longer so I’ve sort of got a background to work on. And am I’m thinking I’m doing pretty well at that. And in German I think I’m doing pretty well too but I’m not sure.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
A: French 8; German 7.

I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
A: You’ve got to take part you know you can’t just sit at the back of the class and listen to everybody else cause you won’t learn it yourself. Em, I thinks you’ve just got to try, you can’t just sort of give up which is like wrong. You’ve just got to keep going really.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
A: I don’t know some teacher reacts to what you do or sometimes you just think oh, I’m finding this pretty easy. So I must be doing okay at it.

I: Any other reasons?
A: I don’t know, it just vibes you get from the teacher and stuff.
I: If the teacher didn’t tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

A: I don’t know maybe not.

I: Not at all?

A: A bit, yeah from other students and stuff.

I: How would they give you the information?

A: You just talk about, you know what did you do last lesson and how did you do, did you find so and so hard, yes it was a killer ...

I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

A: I don’t know, I just like it, it’s fun I like to learn. I think it’s quite interesting.

I: So because of that what happens?

A: I don’t know, I just learn you get better cause you’re better. It just develops.

I: I keeps developing like that?

A: Yeah.

I: Some people say that some people are naturally good or not naturally good at language. Is that true.

A: Em, it can be yeah, I mean I’m okay at some language and naturally good at some language.

I: What German and French?

A: French I find easier, I don’t know just sometimes it corresponds to the English language.

I: What about German?

A: It’s less like English, so I find that less easy.

I: Another thing is trying hard. People say that the main reason people do well when they do is because they try really hard. Is that important?

A: I think so. You’ve got to try you can’t just like put in nothing and get something out. You got to give to receive.

I: You mentioned that you’d been learning French for quite awhile, longer than German.

A: Yeah.

I: Do you think that’s got anything to do with you doing well in French as opposed to in German. The fact that you’re been learning it for longer?

A: Well if you’ve been doing well you can learn more words that you don’t usually understand. At the same time you can sort of fill in between the gaps maybe and this sort of thing.

I: What about helps from other people, friends, teachers and parents. Is that ever a reason for you doing well?

A: Yeah, I think so. I think you can sort of help each other revise with friends and that sort of thing.

I: And what about if the work’s easy is that ever a reason, that the work’s easy?

A: Yeah cause if it’s easy you get a higher mark, if it’s easy you can sort of spend more time over it. If it’s easy you can sort of do the question and fill in the gaps and stuff.
I: If something's easy, why is it easy?
A: Because you've learnt it before you've learnt it very well.
I: So it's because of you, it's not because the teacher made it easy?
A: Well the teacher helps you learn very well.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
A: Last year in like the general big test at the end. I only got like 3 or 4 question wrong, so ... Only a few people got better marks than me.
I: Why did you do well?
A: I don't know, at test time I buckled down. I thought I've got to do this cause it's all got to do with next year and how I co. I wanted to get in the top groups.
I: So it's because you tried hard?
A: I think so.
I: Is there any other reason?
A: I don't know. You're under pressure more so you think I must succeed more.
I: Where does the pressure comes from?
A: I don't know. It comes from me usually.
I: What about not at test? A situation when you did really well that was just in a class can you think of anything?
A: I don't know. At class time I usually just seem to do okay really. I don't do anything too special.
I: So you could try more if you wanted to?
A: I could yeah.
I: Definitely?
A: Yeah definitely. If I wanted to. I could really knock em down - get a lot better marks.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
A: Well I don't know em. It's not like my family would be like oh, no, you've done really badly. It's not like there's loads of pressure from them I don't know I just like I'm a bit selfish. I like to say oh yes I can do this and I can do that so that's why I do it really.
I: So if you do really well who's responsible you, your teacher, your parents?
A: Well my teacher are very good teacher so I admit I learn from them. And they can teach us and I just try and keep it really. I try and keep the knowledge I don't let it slip away without revising and stuff.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages in German?
A: I think I'm pretty good at German not like amazing wonderful but I think I'm pretty good.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
A: 7 or 8.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages in French?
A: Yeah I think I’m about the same standard in French I think.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn’t do well?

A: Eh yeah you could. Because you know they good at it and they could really do something but they choose not to and they don’t.

I: So it’s cause they don’t bother?

A: Yeah. They’ve got the talent but they just don’t use it.

I: Describe them if you know them.

A: Well everybody a little bit, you know everybody doesn’t always use themselves to their full standards.

I: Could this describe you?

A: Definitely, at times.

I: So you know that you’re good but at times you don’t do that well?

A: Yes.

I: What can you do about it?

A: I don’t know sometimes you just lose your motivation and you think oh I really, really can’t be bothered.

I: And what causes that?

A: Oh all sorts of factors. Sometimes it’s just parents going ‘oh you’ve tried.’ Sometimes it’s just friend problems, you know anything.

I: Sometimes causes you to ...

A: Switch off and I really can’t be bothered. I did that a few months ago my grades dropped.

I: For how long, how long did that happen?

A: Well, until I got my report with Miss saying he’s good but he just hasn’t got the motivation. So I just thought what am I doing I’d better get back in.

I: And that made you?

A: Get on my feet again, get back going.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn’t very good at it?

A: Yeah, because they can try really hard and doing really well and they’re doing, you know they’re exceeding all the standards that were expected of them, but they’re not actually that good they’ve just trying really really hard.

I: So to that person is trying hard the most important thing?

A: Yeah I suppose yeah.

I: Describe them if you know them.

A: I think everyone in a way. Some people, sometimes aren’t as good and they break all the standards by trying really hard. But I can’t really think of anyone in particular.

I: Could this describe you?

A: Sometimes I’ve like been expected to do something and I’ve broken the expectations of myself but not really.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?
A: Not much, I’m pretty good at maths I think.

I: Why?

A: I don’t know it’s something to do with my brain I think. I like figures they’re interesting, you can do a lot with them.

I: Do you try hard?

A: Well, it’s all down to the teacher cause I’ve got a really good teacher. So you know you want to impress them so you try hard.

I: So you’re making an effort because you want to impress the teacher?

A: Yeah.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of school. Why?

A: I can sing, I guess.

I: Why are you good at singing?

A: I don’t know I just try, so I train my voice.

I: You train your voice?

A: I think so, yeah, it’s got better anyway. It’s like I’m in a choir so I can go and practice every week so …

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

A: It can attribute to it definitely. They’re clever and they use it and they use their kind of … It can help definitely.

I: Are you clever?

A: Not really.

I: Give yourself a mark put of 10.

A: 7 or 6.

I: Is it possible to be clever at 1 thing and not clever at something else?

A: Definitely you can have a brain for 1 thing and not for another.

I: What does being clever mean?

A: I don’t know. When someone’s clever that means they have the ability to. It doesn’t mean they’re using it. If they’re clever they have the ability to do whatever.

I: How can you tell if your clever?

A: You can’t really. You just have a feeling that you’re doing well. A feeling like, ah, I’ve got the ability here and I’m using it so you know …

I: So doing well means you’re using your cleverness?

A: No not clever you’re using your ability cause you may not have clever ability if you get what I mean. You’re using your ability to its fullest.

I: Can you change that ability?

A: By practice and revising and all that stuff.

I: So if you try hard. Then you can improve your ability?

A: You can yes.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
A: I don’t know cause there’s all sorts of different things. They’re good at different things.

I: So who’s the cleverest of speaking?

A: Couldn’t say, everyone’s as good as each other really. They’re all pretty good.

I: Is there something that somebody’s clever at that you could talk about?

A: Some people are like extra good at speaking out loud in class. And some people are extra good at written work and all that sort of stuff.

I: And how can you tell that they’re extra clever?

A: Oh well you’re always looking at other people’s work you always want to compare yourselves to other people. So you can just see it. And then speaking in front of the class everyone hears it so ...

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

A: Oh, Steve H. He’s up there with Einstein.

I: Why do you think that person is so clever?

A: I don’t know he just uses his ability I suppose I don’t know it’s just that everyone else says that he’s clever.

I: Do you think he has to make an effort?

A: I think so, or he might just have the brain. It’s just the way it is.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

A: It’s the main factor definitely you can’t do well and not try. It just wouldn’t work.

I: But you told me that you’re doing well but you’re not trying as well as you could.

A: I’m not trying as well as I could I could do better.

I: But are you trying?

A: Yeah I’m trying more now. But I could try even more if I wanted to.

I: Is there something that’s more important than trying hard. Is there something that could explain why you’re not trying that hard, but you’re doing well?

A: Encouragement I suppose, cause encouragement can always help. If they say you know you can do this.

I: So who’s saying who can do this?

A: Well everyone, if you’ve got friends. Friends will always say you know you can do this you’ve just got to try.

I: Is that means you try harder?

A: Yeah.

I: How can we explain that you’re doing well but you’re not trying hard as hard as maybe you should be?

A: Well you see what happens is that I’m good in tests I’ll get a good mark in a test and do well in the test and that lives on.

I: So why are you good at tests?

A: For some reason I have like a little hole in my head that can like keep knowledge until we go onto the next bit.
I: Is this something you were born with?

A: I don’t know I think so I might’ve just have like a hole in my head born with it.

I: Is this an advantage you’ve got?
A: For tests yeah, but then if you don't do well in tests and they know you're good at course work they won't like, instantly ... they might oh well her you can just be bad at tests. But if you really prove yourself in the course work teacher won't just mark you by your tests and that's it.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?
A: Not always I don't. Sometimes it's just the exception that proves the rule. Every so often someone will hardly try at something and do really well.

I: Are you doing better than some people who try really hard?
A: No I don't think so.

I: Could you imagine someone who could try really hard and do better than you?
A: Well I've got some friends who think well you know I'm putting stuff in. But they only put stuff in for a bit and they don't get anything back and they think, oh it's not worth trying if they put something in for largest then they'll get results.

I: What don't they get back?
A: A higher mark, teacher saying oh he's definitely tried harder, if you only try hard for 1/2 hour, they won't notice.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
A: I don't know trying hard is definitely very helpful. It will really boost you on the way. It'll keep you going if you try hard.

I: Compared to being clever?
A: I think it's more important cause sometimes you're like born with it and they can use that.

I: You told me that you were born with this special ability?
A: Yeah, like I can do tests but I can't do course work.

I: Why's that are you clever at tests and not clever at course work?
A: Yeah, I think so. Some people are like amazing at course work but then when it's a test and everything just goes blank.

I: So do they try hard at course work than you do?
A: I suppose so probably yeah. They try harder so they get better marks.

I: So which explains it more trying hard or being clever?
A: Trying hard is more important but clever if you're born with it, it can help. If you use being clever, if you use having the ability then that's trying hard isn't it so ... So in a way really they're the same thing.

I: You got the ability but you don't try hard. Are you still gonna do well?
A: Not really cause like you've got it there but you haven't turned it on, it's just like a dead lump in your brain not being used.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
A: Maths and language and stuff.

I: Why do you try hard in Maths?
A: I want to make up for me not being very good in Art and PE and stuff. So I try and make up for it in the other lessons.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages? in German.
A: I don’t know I just find it fun. So I want to keep going at it.

I: You told me that you don’t try your hardest?

A: I don’t try my very hardest, no.

I: So how could you try your hardest?

A: I don’t know if I just really buckled down you know, every night.

I: And would make you do that?

A: Just motivation, you know just do it for me, you know you could really do this. I can see you can do this and then do it.

I: But it needs someone to say that to you?

A: Yeah, it could be me, probably I just need the motivation.

I: Do you think that’s gonna happen?

A: I won’t tell me, but someone else would have to.

I: Who would that be?

A: I don’t know someone who I knew really well who said yeah, I can see you can do this but you’re not say a good friend, or a teacher or parents or anyone.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

A: Well in projects you see like other people handling in like huge wads of paper and you think oh I’ve done this half A4 page or it oh well. But then you’ve got these people coming back with these huge massive great projects at the end and you’ve got this flimsily leaf page.

I: Why does that happen to you?

A: I just find it hard to write long winded things cause I don’t know I just do.

I: So what makes it hard for you?

A: I don’t know I just find it hard to write I can never like think of what to write and I usually ... And I finish it and hand it in a then think of other half of facts and things that I could’ve put in and didn’t.

I: Is that your fault or is that because of somebody or something else?

A: Could be my fault. I just didn’t think about it long enough or my brain just blocks or something.

I: Why did you do badly?

A: All sorts of things. Lack of motivation, or you don’t quite understand it and like if you understand most of it and there’s a little giggly bit. You don’t quite get and can it change a whole sentence and make it something different.

I: Is that cause it’s too difficult?

A: No. I don’t think so. It could just be me my mind wandering, or it could just be the odd things just slipping past.

I: You’ve mentioned motivation 3 or 4 times. What is motivation?

A: It’s just the will to go out there and do it. If you have motivation you have a thing that presses you on.

I: Where does that come from?

A: Anyone or anything.

I: So it could come from you?
A: It could come from me.

I: Or it could come from somebody else?

A: It could come from somebody else.

I: Where does it usually come from?

A: Eh, me lately, I've been thinking I've not been buckling down ...

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

A: To do with me.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?

A: Yeah, I think so.

I: Why's that?
A: Just like a feat that I've done this like you know ... It's something under your belt, like I know this.

I: Any other reasons?

A: I don't know just so people can feel so good about you, like my parents can think you know 'oh he's our son'.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

A: Yeah, I think so.

I: What could you do to do better?

A: Just participate more put up my hand or try harder on homework instead of just doing 1 sentence answers, do longer, explain it more sort of thing.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

A: Em, I suppose so. They were a lot more gobbledygook but now there's more of a pattern to them, you know. Before I won't able to understand anything and how I can understand little things from other things I’ve learnt.
INTERVIEW 10

Interviewee characteristics:

School: B
Age: 13 years and 06 months
Gender: Male
Band: Middle
Languages: German (2 years)
Name: Daniel

I = Interviewer   K = Daniel

I: What do you do in German lessons?
D: Well, the teacher asks us questions, you know and we just have to answer them really. She just picks different people; she asks the questions and we just answer them.
I: What else do you do?
D: We do link sheets - we fill them in.
I: What are they?
D: They are German sheets and you answer the questions really.
I: Do you do any listening?
D: Yeah
I: Anything else?
D: Well, we did some songs once.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
D: Well, I like answering the questions.
I: The ones that you write on the link sheets or the ones you say?
D: Probably the ones you have to say.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the least?
D: Any writing.
I: Give German a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
D: I'd give it 10/10; I love German.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
D: Yeah, I think I'm doing quite well.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
D: 9
I: What do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?
D: Well just revise a lot.
I: Anything else?
D: Well, just sort of pay attention in class and that - not fiddle with pens and stuff.
I: Do some people do that?
D: Yeah
I: But you don't?
D: No, she catches them off guard.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
D: Well, when I'm writing the sheet I know what to do. If the teacher asks me a question I know what to say.
I: Anything else?
D: No.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
D: No.
I: So it's only when the teacher tells you how well you're doing that you know?
D: Yeah.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
D: I don't know.
I: Could a reason be that you are naturally good at German?
D: No, 'cause I've never done German before in my life. But I only learnt it last year and I've done pretty well.
I: So why have you done pretty well?
D: Because I revise a lot.
I: Any other reason? I mean is that the only reason you've done well?
D: Yeah, I just put my hand up and answer the questions.
I: So would you say there's any other reason to do with anyone else or is the reason completely to do with you?
D: Well when we do pairwork that helps me a lot as well.
I: So the person you're working with helps you?
D: Yeah.
I: And that helps you do better?
D: Yeah, and I help them.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
D: Well, we had to say where we'd been on holiday. And had to sort of make a play up and then me and my partner put some comedy into it and that was quite funny. And we got a good mark for it.
I: I: So why did you do really well in that?
D: It was just hard work really.
I: Did you decide to work hard or did anyone make you work hard?
D: Well, I think the teacher was getting annoyed with some people.
I: What about with you?
D: No, we just sat down and got on with it.
I: So was it anything to do with the teacher?
D: No, not really.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
D: It's up to me.
I: Completely?
D: Yeah.
I: Do you think that you are good at German?
D: I think so, for the last 2 years I've got the best mark.
I: Is there any other way you can tell how well you're doing in German apart from the marks?
D: Well, the homework. The homework is really easy.
I: Is that because you make it easy?
D: Yeah.
I: So it could be difficult for other people?
D: Oh yeah.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
D: 8
I: Could you have someone who is good at German but doesn't do well?
D: I don't know, I don't understand that one.
I: Okay, how about this one. Imagine someone who was doing well but actually they're not very good at that language. Is it possible?
D: No, I don't think so.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.
D: PE
I: Tell me why you're good at PE.
D: I don't know but it's 'cause .... like at my last school I was in the football team. We used to practice until we got it perfect.
I: So, is that to do with the time you've been doing it.
D: Yeah.
I: Does that work the same with languages - the longer you learn the better you get?
D: Yeah.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?
D: I'm doing well for my football team.
I: Why?
D: I don't really know - it's just that I try hard.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
D: No!
I: That's quite a definite 'no'.
D: Yeah.
I: Are you clever?
D: No, I'm a sort of average person.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.
D: 7
I: What does being clever mean?
D: You just know a lot of things and answer a lot of questions.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
D: Angela (Interviewee 15).
I: How can you tell that she's clever?
D: She's always got her hand up, she always answers questions and she always gets 10/10.
I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?
D: Chris M
I: How can you tell he's clever?
D: Well, he was in my last school and he always got As for every project we did. He's quiet and he gets on with it.
I: So he tries hard, does he?
D: Yeah.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?
D: It's very important to try hard.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?
D: Yeah.
I: Even if that person who tries hard isn't clever?
D: Mm... I don't know.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
D: Try hard.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
D: German.
I: Why is that?
D: It's just different from all the other lessons because you learn how people speak.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
D: I don't know.
I: Are you trying your hardest?
D: Yeah.
I: If you do badly in German, what are the main reasons?
D: Um.. well.. if it's a really hard sheet I struggle on that but everybody does.
I: Can you make the sheet easier?
D: I think I can.
I: How can you make it easier?
D: Trying hard.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in German?
D: Well, when I first started German I struggled on describing my family and I found that hard.
I: Why did you find it hard?
D: I don't know. It's because we didn't do a lot of German last year because we did 2 languages. And this year we just study German.
I: So the reason is because you don't think you were learning enough German?
D: Yeah because some people have just taken French and some people have taken both.
I: When you do badly in German is it mainly to do with you or someone else?
D: It's 'cause if you try to learn 2 languages you get mixed up. You use French words in the German lessons.
I: So is it mainly you or someone else?
D: Mainly me.
I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages?
D: Well, yeah 'cause I've set myself this target to pass my GCSE German.
I: Is that the reason you want to do well in German?
D: Yeah, and to learn another language.
I: Could you do better in foreign languages?
D: Well, yeah you can always do better than what you're doing now.
I: What could you do to do better?
D: Spend more time on it - even more than we are doing now.
I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?
D: Yeah, I didn't like German in year 7 because like in all my tests I got a higher mark in only one German tests than I did in my French. I wanted to study French but now I really like German.
I: So why did you choose German?
D: Well, because I got a higher mark on the test.
I: Which did you think you were best at?
D: French but I think I've made a good choice 'cause I find German easier.
I: So before when you didn't do well in German, what was the main reason?
D: Well, the work was too hard 'cause we didn't know enough German.
I: Right, thanks Daniel. That's it.


INTERVIEW 11

Interviewee characteristics:

School: B
Age: 13 years and 01 month
Gender: Male
Band: Middle
Languages: German (2 years)
Name: Timothy

I = Interviewer  K = Timothy

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
T: Um.. We revise basics like numbers and how to say, like your name. And how to ask people their names and where they come from.

I: What else do you do?
T: At the moment we're doing about school and what time school starts and times and dates.

I: Do you listen to tapes?
T: Oh! Yeah, we do.

I: What about writing? Do you write?
T: Yeah we do writing. We do exercises from the textbook.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
T: Probably doing the exercises from the textbook, cause we've got to listen to the tape.

I: Why do you like that?
T: It's good fun.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the least?
T: Probably writing vocab cause it takes a long time.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
T: Nine

I: So you enjoy it?
T: Yeah

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
T: Okay, I've just got moved up so, so I've got better I think.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
T: Eight.

I: You told me that you were getting better. So, what do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?
T: Practice it quite a bit, you have to learn it. You have to practice it at home, revising vocabulary and that.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
T: By getting better grades and getting better marks in the tests.

I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

T: You would know like if you were able to answer the questions the teacher asked.

I: Anything else? For example, imagine you didn't have a teacher to tell you how well you were doing. How could you tell?

T: Probably, just 'cause you could tell that you were learning well. And being able to pronounce it properly.

I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

T: I enjoy it probably.

I: If you weren't doing well then would you still enjoy it?

T: Not as much, no. As you learn more it gets easier and gets more fun.

I: Are there any other reasons?

T: No, not particularly.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

T: My end of year test 'cause I was third highest in the class.

I: Well done. Can you tell me all about it?

T: It was just the end of year test you've got to do. I moved up 'cause I got 93%.

I: When you did that test and you handed it in did you think you'd done well?

T: No, I didn't.
I: Were you surprised when you got it back?
T: Yeah.
I: Can you tell me about a time in a normal lesson when you did well.
T: There's no real time when I do really well. I just do the same thing.
I: And what is that?
T: Just get on with it.
I: Okay, is doing well at German up to you or someone else?
T: It's up to me really.
I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
T: Quite good.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
T: 7
I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?
T: Yeah, 'cause if they don't work hard, they might be good but they just don't show it.
I: Do you know anyone like this?
T: No.
I: Could this describe you?
T: No, not really. I've always worked hard and I just seem to get better.
I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?
T: Em.. Yeah, if they worked hard they could get better.
I: Do you know anyone like this?
T: Yeah.
I: Tell me about them.
T: They're good but they've just worked hard at it and they get better and better.
I: Could this describe you?
T: Em.. Yeah.
I: So at the beginning do you think you were good at German?
T: Not that good.
I: Do you think you're good now?
T: I'm good, yeah.
I: And do you think you're doing well?
T: Yeah, I think so.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.
T: Maths, I'm quite good at.
I: Why?
T: Well, I enjoy that as well. It's interesting to learn about.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.
T: Em.. Hockey.
I: Why?
T: 'Cause I enjoy it and I practise a lot.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
T: It can be but like I said it can just be because they work hard at it. They want to be good at it and they have to work for it.
I: Are you clever?
T: I'm average.
I: Is it possible to be clever at one thing and not another?
T: Yeah.
I: So, for example, tell me something you are clever at.
T: Probably Maths.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how clever you are at maths.
T: Em..8.
I: And in German?
T: 7.
I: Okay. So what does being clever mean?
T: It means being good at something and working hard and being able to do the subject.
I: Is it possible to change how clever you are?
T: I think so, if you start to learn more and enjoy it more then you become more clever?
I: How can you tell if you're clever?
T: When you get good marks and stuff and when people ask you for help and you know how to do it and they don't.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?
T: Probably Adam.

I: How can you tell?

T: Because he is always answering the questions and he does well in his tests.

I: Is there any other way, if I sat in your German class that I could tell that Adam was clever?

T: Yeah, if you watched him he'd be working and always putting his hand up to answer questions and that.

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

T: Probably John.

I: Why do you think that person is so clever?

T: Just the same as Adam really, he puts his hand up and that.

I: If you want to do well in German, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?

T: Very, 'cause if you don't try hard you won't get anywhere, you just won't learn anything.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?

T: Not always.

I: Describe a situation like this where the person who tries hard doesn't do as well as the person who doesn't try hard.

T: Perhaps in a test or something. They revised and the other person hasn't. That person might just guess at it and still do better than the other one.

I: So why did that person, who didn't revise, do well?

T: I don't know...luck really.

I: Is luck important?

T: Not really no. Not for doing languages.

I: Is there ever a time when you think you're lucky?

T: Yeah, sometimes.

I: Give me an example.

T: When I got 93% in my test. I felt lucky then.

I: Did you try really hard for that test?
T: I did yeah.
I: So, the reason you said before was that you tried hard. Was a little bit of the reason luck?
T: I don't think so. Perhaps a bit. I think it's more trying hard than luck.
I: Right, is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
T: Trying hard.
I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being clever?
T: I think you need a bit of both to do well but probably more trying hard than being clever.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
T: Probably maths.
I: Why is that?
T: 'Cause I like the subject and I like to do it.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
T: To do more listening and interesting things than writing.
I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
T: If I haven't been trying hard and if I haven't revised.
I: Any other reasons?
T: I don't think so.
I: Some people say the work's too difficult. Would that ever be a reason for you?
T: No, not really.
I: Some people would say that they didn't get help from their friends, teachers or parents. Could this ever be a reason for you?
T: Perhaps, if I didn't get help from the teacher.
I: Has that ever happened to you?
T: Em.. No.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?
T: I once got a low grade in my vocab test. I didn't feel very proud about that.
I: Why didn't you do well?
T: I didn't revise properly for it.
I: So was it all your fault you didn't do well?
T: Not entirely but mostly me, yeah.
I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?
T: Mainly to do with me.
I: Is that something you can do anything about?
T: Yeah.
I: So you could change it next time?
T: Yeah.
I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages?
T: It's not that important but I want to.
I: Why?
T: 'Cause I might need it someday if I go into Europe.
I: Could you do better in foreign languages?
T: Probably if I worked a little harder.
I: Could you work a little harder?
T: Yeah probably
I: So you don't think you're working your best?
T: No
I: What could you do to do better?
T: Revise more and listen more and do more writing?
I: Do you mean listen to the teacher or tapes?
T: The teacher.
I: So what happens sometimes?
T: I don't understand what she's saying. I usually do but sometimes I don't.
I: Is that your fault or the teacher's fault?
T: Bit of both really.
I: Is there anything you can do about that?
T: Probably listen to the teacher more.
I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?
T: Yeah, I didn't really think that much about it really but now I enjoy it a lot more. I think more like I might need it.
I: When did this change happen?
T: Probably about halfway through year 7.
I: Doing well in German and doing well in other subjects, do you have to do the same thing or is there something different about it?
T: You still have to work hard but in different ways than other subjects.

I: Give me an example of how you have to work hard in other subjects and then an example of German.

T: Em... In History you have to listen more to the teacher than in German. In PE you have to work hard physically but in German it's learning.

I: Thank you very much. That's it.
I = Interviewer; P= Peter

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
P: Well we sort of like read out of books and we sometimes perform a play for the class.
I: What else?
P: We listen to tapes and we do writing and spelling.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
P: The speaking.
I: In what situations?
P: In like plays.
I: And the least?
P: The spelling.
I: Why's that?
P: Cause I'm not very good at spelling.
I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment?
P: 8 out of 10.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
P: Em fairly well.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
P: About 8 again.
I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
P: You have to understand what they've saying and know how to write it down.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
P: By the grades I get in my book.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
P: Em, sort of.
I: How?
P: If the class understood what I was saying or someone being able to read my spellings.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
P: Well we go over to France a lot I pick up the language from there.
I: Any other reasons?
P: I listen a lot ...
I: Some people say that some people are just born good at French. Is that possible?
P: In some cases it could be.
I: Some people say it's very important to try hard is that true?
P: Yeah.
I: Some people say a very important thing is other people e.g. parents, teachers, friends when you do well in French is the reason ever other people?
P: Em, yeah cause they can influence you.
I: Who in particular?
P: My mum and dad.
I: They help you do well, do they?
P: Yeah.
P: And my friends in general.
I: Some people say they do well because the work is easy. Is that a reason?
P: Sometimes it is but others it's not.
I: So when you think you do well is it because it was easy?
P: Yeah.
I: Do you ever do well when it's difficult?

P: Sometimes.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

P: When we had to speak out of a book what they were saying they're like sort of cartoon strips in our French books and we have to read out what they're saying.

I: Why did you do well?

P: Because I knew most of what they were saying and the rest of it I could just work out.

I: How were you able to know what they were saying?

P: Em, from what I've picked up in other lessons.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

P: Up to me.

I: Completely?

C: Yeah.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

C: Yes.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.

P: About 9.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

P: Em, yeah well they could understand what's being said but they just can't write it down.

I: Does this describe anyone you know?

P: Em no.

I: Could this describe you?

P: Em, a little bit.

I: So you think you're good at French but sometimes you don't do well

P: Yeah.

I: Why would that be?

P: Down to my spelling again.

I: So it's the writing, the bit where you don't do well.

P: Yeah.

I: Why's that?

P: Em ... It's because I can't always em sound the word out.

I: So why don't you do well in spelling?

P: Well I'm dyslexic.

I: Is there anything you can do about that?

P: You can only keep on practicing.
I: Would you say that is something that is your fault?

P: Em, no.

I: Is it because of anybody else?

P: Well it's partially down to my dads side of the family, 'cause his sister's dyslexic.

I: So you would say it's a genetic thing?

P: Yeah.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

P: Not really.

I: It's not possible?

P: No.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.

P: I'm quite good at history.

I: Why?

P: Much the same as French I listen a lot and I understand.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?

P: Em, I'm good at football.

I: Why?

P: It's just that my brother's a lot older and he teaches me the skills and stuff.
I: So do you enjoy it?
P: Yeah.
I: And do you try really hard?
P: Yeah.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
P: Could be, but could be that they're good at other subjects.
I: So clever and good are the same thing, are they?
P: Well em sort of ...
I: What's the difference between clever and good?
P: Well clever is where you know a lot and you're just sort of like doing good work.
I: Are you clever?
P: Not really.
I: Is it possible to be clever at one thing and not clever at something else?
P: Em yeah.
I: When you say you're not clever, what are you not clever at?
P: I'm not too clever at geography.
I: Whey's that?
P: Em it just doesn't appeal to me.
I: Do you try?
P: Em, sort of ....
I: Are you clever at French?
P: Fairly.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 in French.
P: About 7.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 in Geography.
P: About 5.
I: What does being clever mean?

P: You know a lot.

I: How can you tell if your clever?

P: By answering the teachers' questions.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?

P: Em Nicola S.

I: How can you tell?

P: Because she knows what she's saying and she understands it.

I: If I was sitting in a lesson, would I be able to tell that Nicola was clever?

P: Yeah.

I: How?

P: Because she always puts her hand up to answer.

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

P: Boy called Adam W.

I: Why do think that person is so clever?

P: I don't know. He's in the top for everything.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

P: Very important.

I: Most important?

P: Yeah.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?

P: Em, most of the time.

I: What situation is there that people who don't try hard do better?

P: Well if you're just naturally good at something but you're not really bothered.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

P: Try hard.
I: Being clever at French, is that the same as being natural at French?

P: Em, no because being clever, you've learnt it you had to go up in stages.

I: Does that mean you have to try?

P: Yeah.

I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being clever?

P: Yeah, cause you have to work for it.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

P: French.

I: Why?

P: Cause I enjoy it.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

P: Well some of my best mates have been moved up into middle ...

I: So how's that made you feel?

P: Well, em.. I thought like, they're better than me.

I: So has that made you work harder?

P: Yeah.

I: Why's that?

P: To try and get up with them.

I: Is that working?

P: Well sort of ...

I: So that's made you try harder. Anything else?

P: To have no one I know in that class.

I: So there are still some friends left in your class.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

P: When there's a test and I forget to study for it.

I: Any other reasons?

P: Just if I've been away and they've started something different and I have to catch up.
I: Is that your fault or somebody else's?
P: It's my fault for being away.
I: Is there anything you can do about that?
P: No, not really.
I: Would your problem with spelling sometimes be a reason why you don't do well?
P: Yeah.
I: Is that reason that would describe as about you?
P: Yeah.
I: Is it something you can do something about?
P: Yeah.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?
P: When we had our test and I didn't do well.
I: Why was that?
P: It was because my mind was blank for the test.
I: Is that part of your dyslexic problem?
P: Yeah.
I: Is that something you could do something about?
P: If I keep on learning and stuff.
I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?
P: Mainly me.
I: Completely?
P: No, not completely.
I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?
P: Em yeah.
I: How?
P: Very, so I can get qualifications
I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

P: Em I could move up.

I: What could you do to do better?

P: By perfecting my spelling cause that's the main reason I'm in the bottom.

I: And that's something you can do something about?

P: Yeah.

I: Anybody else do anything about it?

P: Em my mum and dad could test me.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

P: Yeah cause then I thought it was fairly boring. Now I'm interested in it.

I: So what's made it different?

P: Just the work we do it's more fun.
**INTERVIEW 13**

Interviewee characteristics:

- **School:** B
- **Age:** 12 years and 10 months
- **Gender:** Female
- **Band:** High
- **Languages:** French (3 years), German (2 years)
- **Name:** Jasmine

**I** = Interviewer  **J** = Jasmine

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

J: Like, we learn things like from flash cards. We do activities from tapes to do. We have a little sheet & we got to out the answer from listening to the tape. We do things from a book. We do plays sometimes.

I: Anything else?

J: Sometimes we sing songs.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?

J: Doing the plays is good & em ... I don’t know plays is the best bit.

I: And the test?

J: The tests when you have the little tests from the vocals.

I: Is there anything else you don’t like?

J: Em ... No.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

J: German probably 9 ... French 8.

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

J: Quite well.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

J: 10

I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
J: Well I think liking the teacher is ... Like that helps you a long the way to be better at it. If you got a nice teacher. Em, doing fun things and you’re still learning.

I: What else helps you do well?

J: Getting, knowing languages. I’m quite good at languages. So ... My mum can help me cause she’s a bit French though.

I: When you say you’re good at languages. Do you think you’re naturally good at languages? Or have you become good at languages?

J: Well I was ... In my first school, cause we learnt French in my first school. I was always like one of the top people who did it. I think for languages some people have it & some people just won’t be able to get it into their heads.

I: Those people that can’t get it into their heads. Is there anything they can do?

J: Well you can practice & practice & practice.

I: And if they practice will they become good?

J: Eventually.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?

J: The marks you get in your book. What it says in you report ... I think you know because if you do something wrong everybody goes stupid.

I: If the teacher didn’t tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

J: You wouldn’t really cause em, they like tell you how well you’re doing. Like ‘come on you can do ...’ They don’t say like ‘you’re rubbish’. But if you’re good then they do say.

I: And if they didn’t say would you know that you were good?

J: Not really, no.

I: When you do in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: I learn, I do learn the vocals. You have to know that really to get the language otherwise you won’t be able to speak it. Do the homework you have to like try in the class lessons cause if you don’t try & you don’t bother to do it. You’re not gonna improve.

I: So is trying very important?

J: Well I don’t try exceedingly hard but I do try.

I: But you think you’re doing really well?

J: Not really well but I do well yeah.

I: But you don’t try that hard?

J: No.

I: So why do you do well is there another reason?

J: I don’t know really.

I: Someone say that people are naturally good at languages. Is this possible?

J: Some people yeah.

I: Are you not good?

J: A little bit yeah.
I: And is that 1 reason why do you well?
J: I think so.

I: What about people that help you like the teacher parents your friends in the class. Are they important for you doing well?
J: Not particularly no. Because they don’t help me that much. Like if I get stuck. Then my mum’ll help me with my homework.

I: But it’s not that important?
J: Not really.

I: What about, is the work easy?
J: Sometimes it’s easy to get a hold of what you’re doing but other times. Like in French, sometimes she babbles on like & you sort of think what the hell are you talking about cause she doesn’t explain what she’s talking about afterwards. She think we have to get it straight away.

I: And that’s difficult?
J: Yeah.

I: But do you still do well in it?
J: Cause I ask her what she’s talking about.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
J: In my tests. My year assessment. I got I think, about 3 marks off full marks.

I: So why did you do really well in that?
J: I revised ... I had all the work, like I hadn’t missed out on any.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
J: What do you mean?

I: Well when you do well. Is it because you decided to do well or is it because somebody else decided something about you.
J: I don’t so, I think I decide.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?
J: Yes.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
J: 9

I: For both?
J: Yeah.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn’t do well?
J: Em, probably, because if they don’t like put any effort into it at all & like they don’t bother, then they’re not going to get anything. If they like miss the lessons.

I: But you said that you don’t try your hardest?
J: No, but I do the work.

I: So you try hard enough?
J: Yeah.
I: Describe them if you know them.

J: Not really, cause I’m in the top set if they were good at language but didn’t try then they wouldn’t be in the top set.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn’t very good at it?

J: Yeah, they could copy the person that sits next to them.

I: Any other reason?

J: They could like cheat in the tests or ... lots of ways you can be able to cheat & get around not being very good at it & be able to sort of lie that you are good.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn’t very good at it? But really are doing well - not cheating? Is there any way that’s possible?
J: Well they could be doing well for their standard. Like if they’re in the middle set, then they might be doing really well for their standards but then they want to be really brilliant at the languages.

I: Describe them if you know them.

J: I don’t think so.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in school. Why?

J: English.

I: Why are you good at English?

J: I don’t know really...

I: Any reason at all?

J: I don’t think so. I do the work, you know, you can’t be really good at something unless you do the work.

I: Do you try hard?

J: Yeah.

I: Is it easy?

J: Quite easy.

I: Would it be easy if you didn’t try hard?

J: Yeah, I think so.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of school. Why?

J: Horse-riding.

I: Tell me all about it?

J: What do you want to know?

I: Well what do you do?

J: Well you go down the stables. Sometimes I go down in Sunday.

I: So why are you good at it?

J: Cause my mum’s paid for lessons for me.

I: So you’ve been practicing?

J: Yeah.

I: Do you enjoy it?

J: Yeah.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

J: Yeah.

I: Are you clever?

J: I think so.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.

J: In every subject?

I: I’m not sure you have to tell me. Is it possible for people to be clever at 1 thing & not clever at something else.
J: Yes, definitely.
I: How clever in German?
I: And in French?
J: The same.
I: What subject are you the cleverest in?
J: Probably language.
I: What does being clever mean?
J: I don’t know how you’d say it. Being clever, you have look it up in a dictionary.
I: To you.
J: Know what’s going on in the lesson. Getting good marks. I’m not really sure to be honest.
I: How can you tell if your clever?
J: I get good marks.
I: If you didn’t get marks, would you be able to tell that you’re clever?
J: Well I think, I know what I’m doing things right & I’m doing things wrong.
I: Without anybody else telling you that.
J: Cause sometimes I can think to myself. This isn’t right.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
J: Well there’s people who are clever at it but don’t try hard. I couldn’t really put a finger or who’s the cleverest cause I’m not them.
I: Is it difficult to tell when somebody else is clever?
J: Well you don’t see their marks or …
I: If I was sat in your class would I be able to tell who was clever & who wasn’t clever?
J: Yeah.
I: How would I be able to tell?
J: Cause they’re getting the answer right, if they’re like paying attention.
I: So if they’re getting the answers & not looking at her then I know they’re not clever.
J: Well, they could be just not trying hard then.
I: So is there a connection between clever & trying hard?
J: Probably … No not really because they could be clever but they could be staring out the window & nor bothering.
I: So that means they’re not trying hard?
J: Yeah.
I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?
J: Andrew, he’s quite clever.
I: Why do you think that person is so clever?

J: I don't know really you just ... You can tell when people are, when they're working on the way that they work. Maybe if they get a good mark.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?

J: Depends how good you are. Like if you're not very good at it then you've got to try really hard to do it, but if you're good at it you don't need to try that hard.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?

J: Not necessarily. Because I don't try that hard & I do well.

I: And you do better than some people who try harder than you?

J: Yeah.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
J: I think both are quite important. But being clever, means that you’re gonna get a job in the future or something.

I: And what about in French language are you gonna learn more ... Who’s gonna learn more. The person who tries hard or the person who doesn’t?

J: A bit of both really.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

J: Probably art.

I: Why is that?

J: Because, em, I’m not that good at it & I want to be able to do it. So I try harder in it.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages? in German.

J: Eh, having more fun things to do.

I: Why would that make you try harder?

J: Because you’re enjoying it so you want to like do more, try more things ...

I: Anything else?

J: If the teacher got really on my back & said things like ‘come on try harder’.

I: So if the teacher really made you?

J: Yeah.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

J: Like for these tests. Sometimes you don’t bother to revise for them or you forget about them or you were away & no-ones told you that there was a test.

I: Could it be sometimes that they’re too difficult?

J: I don’t think anything’s that difficult once it’s explained to you, then you should be able to grasp it. But if something isn’t explained to you, then you’re not gonna know what it means so you can’t write it down.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn’t do well in foreign languages?

J: Oh, there was 1 test & I got 6 out of 10.

I: Why didn’t you do well?

J: I didn’t revise for it.

I: Can you think of a situation that wasn’t a test, where it was just the lesson?

J: No not really.

I: No, you usually do well?

J: Yeah.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

J: I think it’s me really.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?

J: Yeah.

I: Why’s that?
J: I don’t know ... cause I’ll be able to get a job. If you can do the language, then my mum says you can get more jobs.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

J: Em, probably. Well I could try harder in French.

I: Try harder in French, does that mean you could do better?

J: No I don’t know I got a 1-1. I can’t really get a higher grade on my report.

I: What could you do to do better?

J: Try harder in the lesson. Spend longer on the homework ... If you don’t understand, make sure you ask teacher, cause then they can explain it to you.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

J: Well, I thought German was a bit boring but I like it more now.

I: Why’s that?

J: I like the teacher more & I think once you learn more things about it, then you can enjoy it more cause you can say more things and you’re not just learning like ... You’ve learnt quite a lot of things so when you do like the plays they’re more fun to do. And you can understand more when you have the tapes & you’re listening to what they’re saying.
Interviewee characteristics:

School: B  
Age: 13 years and 04 months  
Gender: Female  
Band: Middle  
Languages: German (1 year)  
Name: Karen

I = Interviewer  K = Karen

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?

K: The first thing we do is we learn a new subject and Miss gets us to say the words over and over again. Then we do an exercise on it, like out of the book and then we copy down the vocab.

I: What other things do you do?

K: Sometimes we play games. She holds up cards and we have to guess which subjects she's got. We've got groups and the group that gets the most sometimes gets a little prize.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you like the most?

K: I do like...I don't really like writing down so I like saying it most.

I: What situations do you like speaking in?

K: Well, it's okay when she picks on people and says, 'What's this and what's that,' but I like it when you do conversations with your partner and then read them out.

I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you like the least?

K: Probably writing down questions - it's boring.

I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.

K: Oh probably about 5 or 6.

I: Ah!

K: Well it's not my favourite lesson.

I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?

K: I think I'm doing alright, quite well. Well, I started off really well but I've gone down a bit, because before I was just starting a new school and I had to really try. Now that I'm into the school and everything...

I: You came to the school at the start of year 8?

K: No, I came in year 7 but I only started German in year 8, so I thought I'll really make a go of this 'cause I didn't do well in French.

I: So all the other people in the class had already done German.

K: Um.. Some yes, some have but some were in my class already. I don't know. I thought I've never done German before so I'm going to try and give it a go. But now I just....I do still enjoy it but I'm not always enthusiastic about it.

I: So you tried really hard to start with. Do you try as hard now?

K: I do still try hard but I don't try as hard. I know that, I don't try as hard.

I: Why don't you try as hard?
K: Well, before it was a new teacher. I didn't know her. I wanted to make a good impression. Now she knows me I don't think I have to be bothered anymore. I've got the other subjects and I have to work really hard in them as well. So, you can't really work hard in this and not all the other subjects. So I just even it out.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.

K: I'd say, em.. 7 or 8.

I: And what do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?

K: I think you should not just listen but I think you should participate in speaking out when she asks you. You should give examples and stuff, you should like revise for tests and get good marks and work hard on the vocab and stuff.

I: Anything else?

K: I think you should... just little things like remember your books and everything and get on with my teacher.

I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?

K: I think by the teacher. The teachers make sort of comments or you look at your grades and you think well that's alright, that's pretty good.

I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?

K: I think you would but not as well. I think you'd just tell by looking back in your work, thinking is this neat, is this good, how I got it right. I think you can just tell, like if scruffy then you can you can tell you're not going to get a good grade. If it's all neat then you can tell you're going to get a good grade.

I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

K: Em.. I don't know. What do you mean?

I: Sometimes you do well in German. Can you explain why you do well?

K: Well, 'cause I don't like people to see me as 'Oh, she can't be bothered'. I don't like people thinking that of me, so I just... I do well if I enjoy the subject and I do enjoy German. I just think I don't want Miss to look down on me or anything, or think I'm a bad student. So I just do it.

I: Some people say that people are just naturally good at languages. Would you agree with that?

K: Well, yes some are. I mean people are good at different things. Some are good at the accent and some are good at writing down.

I: Can that be changed can people become better?

K: Yeah, you can become better if you want to.

I: So how can you do that?

K: Like I've got a book at home, the same one that we have here, my mum bought it for me. Whenever I do my homework I just look in the book if I'm not sure and it really helps. 'Cause if you get it wrong, you think well I could've looked it up and if you look through it from time to time you pick up stuff and it makes you better.

I: Some people say that to do well in German you have to try extra hard. Is that true?

K: Yeah, it's easy to speak 'cause it's like English but you have to try hard to learn the spelling. If you don't try hard then it's not easy.

I: Some people say that to do well in German it's important that other people help you. Do you think that's important?

K: Yeah because, say you go home and your mum and dad aren't in and you don't know
what to do then it helps if your parents are there because they can help you. And your friends can say 'I've done that,' and help you. It does help 'cause I don't think you can do all of it on your own.

I: Of all the things we've said what do you think is the most important?

K: I think trying hard is very important.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

K: Well, we used to have these tests every week. We had to write down the vocab when we got it and if you got three 10/10 then you got a gold star. I used to get 10/10 on every single one and I got all gold stars for it all. They all called me a swot and everything but it was nice.

I: Why did you do well?

K: That was at the start. I was enthusiastic about the subject. I thought 'Oh, this is a new subject I've never done before, I can learn lots and get 10/10 if I really want to. But now I'm weighed down with lots of homework at the moment. I do still learn though.

I: Getting gold stars, is that part of the reason you did well?

K: Yeah, that's part of the reason. You do well if you get rewarded.

I: Are there other reasons?

K: I wanted to do well for myself. I wanted... I mean I don't want to get all the attention, but I just like people thinking well of me. I don't like people thinking, 'Oh, she could do better.' I like people thinking, 'Oh, she's doing really well.'

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

K: What doing well for yourself?

I: Doing well in German.

K: I think it's up to you.

I: Completely?

K: Well it's up to you mostly and up to other people to give you some help.

I: Do you think that you are good at German?

K: I'm okay, yes.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.

K: An 8 or a 7.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

K: Well, you can have people that are really good at German but they just don't bother. They think... well they might be hanging around with the wrong crowd. People who don't do their homework and just can't be bothered. That's probably people who could; they have the ability to do really well and they are good at German but they just don't let their ability out.

I: So the reason they're not doing well, is it their fault or someone else's.

K: I don't really blame anyone. I just think it might be some people's influence on them or it's not cool to do well.

I: Does this describe anyone you know?

K: Yeah, William, Sam and John. They are good at German but they're not doing well. They are doing better than they were but that's because Miss has got them to open up. They've got better but they're like 'I can't be bothered 'cause it's not cool.'

I: What's the reason they're not doing well?

K: I think William can't be bothered and he's got a total reputation for not doing well. So I think he thinks he's got to follow it. Sam and James think it's just not cool to do well.
I: Could this describe you?

K: Sort of yeah. Well, 'cause I was with the same crowd that they often were. There's this girl in my class that hangs around with them and I thought, 'I don't want her to think that I'm not cool.' So I didn't do as much in German.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

K: Yeah I think so. There might be someone that's not really good at German but if they try hard they would get better.

I: Does this describe anyone you know?

K: Yeah, sort of. Yeah, it's the other Katie. She really tries hard in German and she's not that brilliant but she's doing well.

I: Could this describe you?

K: Em... I think a bit yeah. I mean at the start I didn't know much and I was trying hard but I didn't know a lot of German.

I: And you did well.

K: Yeah.

I: But now it couldn't describe you?

K: No, not now.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.

K: Drama.

I: Why's that?

K: 'Cause I just love acting. I'm not good at maths and academic subjects but I love acting.

I: Is German an academic subject?

K: I think it's a bit of both. In academic subjects you have to do like tests and writing. I think it's also a bit of speaking out as well.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.

K: Well, drama as well. I'm part of the student plays and it's just like acting for people my age. I just like acting so that's what I do in my free time.

I: Is it important to be clever in German to do well?

K: Em.. not always. Sometimes people do well if they really try and they might not be naturally that clever. But people can do well if they try.

I: Can people who are not clever become clever?

K: Yeah I think so, if you really try; like look at your books and do all your homework and do really well. Then you'll become clever at the subject.

I: Are you clever?

K: No, I don't think I'm clever.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for being clever.

K: What in German?

I: Yeah, in German.

I: What about the subject that you're cleverest in?

K: I don't really have one 'cause I'm not really clever at all.

I: What does being clever mean?

K: I think it means that you use your initiative all the time and you just.. The answer comes just like that. I mean I always have to have things explained to me.

I: How can you tell if your clever?

K: If you get every single answer right and.. you can just tell by looking back and seeing how well you've done.

I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?

K: Angela.

I: How can you tell?

K: Well, when she got her test back she got.. like 98 out of 100 or something.

I: If I was sat in the class watching, how could I tell she was clever?

K: You probably wouldn't 'cause she's shy and never speaks.

I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?

K: Probably Zoe.

I: Why do you think she is so clever?

K: 'Cause she's top for almost every subject and she gets all the answers right.

I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?

K: I think you have to try hard to achieve anything. You have to try at everything, 'cause if you don't you won't achieve anything.

I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?

K: Yeah, if you don't try you won't get anywhere.

I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?

K: Try hard.

I: Is there any connection between trying hard and being clever?

K: No I don't think so. You can try hard even if you're not clever at all.

I: What lessons do you try hardest in?

K: Could be drama.

I: Why is that?

K: 'Cause it's my favourite subject.

I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?

K: If we had more speaking and not so much writing. The thing I don't like is the writing. You know, the copying stuff from the books. I'd make more effort if in German if there was more speaking, doing little plays...'cause we do little plays from like the book and you just have to act it out.

I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

K: I think the main reason is that I find it a bit boring.
I: So what happens?

K: Well, when I find it boring I just turn off. I don't listen 'cause I find it boring.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages because you found it boring?

K: Well, it's just all the time really. Well, not all the time but if it's a rainy day we're just doing loads of writing. Or if it's hot I just sit there and find it really boring.

I: What about moods, do moods affect you?

K: Yeah, I mean if I've had a fight or something with a friend then I'm just not in the mood. I just don't bother.

I: So when you don't do well 'cause your bored, is that your fault or someone else's?

K: It's not my fault 'cause I can't help what I'm bored from. Then it's not Miss's fault 'cause she's just following what she has to do.

I: When you do badly in German, is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

K: Mainly to do with me. I think I can try for how well I do. No one else says you have to do that well. I control how well I do. So if I don't do well it's really up to me.

I: So how well could you do in German. Could you do really, really, well?

Yeah, I could, but I just don't.

I: Why?

K: 'Cause if I do really well in German then I have to do really well in other subjects and then I'd be really exhausted.

I: Is it important for you to do well in German?

K: Yeah, you've got to take GCSEs. It's an important subject. I mean if your doing music or something that's not as important as German.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

K: Yeah, much better.

I: What could you do to do better?

K: If the lesson changed a bit then I could be inspired to do more I think.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?

K: Yeah definitely.

I: What's the difference?

K: Before I didn't know anything about it. I had one lesson and was like, 'Oh this is fun.' Now I know what it's really like. I mean it's like the novelty wears off.

I: Well thank you for you help. That's it.

INTERVIEW 15

Interviewee characteristics:
School: B
Age: 13 years and 01 month
Gender: Female
Band: Middle
Languages: German (2 years)
I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
A: We practice.. um.. speech, um.. we learn vocab. we do exercises in books and we do tapes and things. Sometimes we do games to actually learn the things.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
A: Doing speaking out loud, when you make up a conversation and then you do it in the class.
I: and the least?
A: Learning all the vocab.
I: How do you do that?
A: Well, what we have to do is copy all the vocab down in our books. Then we take it home and learn it and then we have like tests.
I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment.
A: 9, I enjoy it quite a lot. I look forward to it.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
A: I think I'm doing better than most of my other subjects. I'm doing quite well in German.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
A: About 8 or maybe 9.
I: What do you have to do to do well in foreign languages?
A: Basically just concentrate and do what you're told. Just have fun and enjoy it.
I: What you have to do to do well in German, is that the same as in other subjects?
A: Yeah, you have to enjoy it, do your best and try your hardest.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
A: By the marks I get.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, how would you still know?
A: If I'm coming out with the right answers, if I'm doing the oral work and things. And if I'm getting things right when we do activities.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
A: Probably, 'cause I want to do well in German.
I: So what does that mean you do?
A: Just put all my effort into every lesson.
I: Could there be other reasons, like for example, help from friends, teachers or your parents?
A: No, not really.
I: Could it be that it's easy?
A: Well, some of it's easy but others can be a bit tricky.
I: Some people say you're either good at languages or not good at them. Is that true?
A: No, I don't think so, because, like some people in our class sort of like can do some of it but others can't, so you just have to try your best.

I: Do you think you are a natural at languages.
A: Not a natural but I've got a good memory.
I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?
A: Well, I got a test back today and I got a gold star for it.
I: Is that important; getting a gold star?
A: It is at the moment, I've got 21, but I haven't had one recently. My mum keeps nagging me.
I: So do you try harder because your mum keeps nagging you?
A: Yeah.
I: When you did that test did you know you'd done well before you gave it in?
A: Um.. I knew I was going to get a high mark but she doesn't give out many stars at the moment. So that was the thing.
I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?
A: Up to me.
I: Completely?
A: Yeah.
I: Do you think that you are good at German?
A: Fairly good, yeah
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.
A: 9 or something. Quite a high mark. I could probably do better than most people in my class.
I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?
A: Yeah I think you could 'cause some people who can speak it really well but in other things they can't like do it on paper. So they can be doing really well but not getting the marks.
I: So they could be good at one thing and not at another?
A: Yeah, like I'm better at speaking than writing.
I: But you still do well at writing?
A: Yeah, I still do all right.
I: Could you have someone who was doing well at German but wasn't very good at it?
A: Um.. I don't know... They could it depends on how hard they work on their stuff. I think it depends on how much you want to do it.
I: So effort is very important?
A: Yeah, especially in languages because you speak English but when you go in the lesson you have to speak German.
I: So someone who is not good at German can do well if they try hard?
A: Yeah, but it also depends on how well they can do it.
I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School.
A: I'm all right at sport I suppose
I: Why?
A: Cause I play like netball all the time.
I: Do you enjoy it?
A: Yes, it's one of my favourite lessons. And also history, so I do quite well in history.
I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School.
A: Playing Netball.
I: Netball again?
A: Yeah, I do that a lot. I play for the team every Saturday and train 3 times a week.
I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?
A: It can be important, I mean I'm not clever like really, really clever but I do okay. I think people who are very clever can do very well at German. I think it depends on what subject you're in really.
I: So are you clever?
A: No, not really.
I: Are you clever at German?
A: I'm probably quite near the top of my class. It's probably 'cause I've got a lot of confidence in it as well.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10.
A: 8
I: And in German?
A: 9
I: What does being clever mean?
A: Knowing a lot of things I suppose; like taking it all in and be able to re-do it like say in maths - equations and that sort of thing. You can take it all in and then do it straightaway on paper. I think that's being clever.
I: And in German?
A: Being able to .. Well, if Miss tells us to do something we go away and do it really well and you get good grades for it.
I: How can you tell if you're clever?
A: Having people tell you you're clever. I suppose you don't really want to hear it but you are and you just have to face it really.
I: Do people ever tell you you're clever?
A: No, 'cause I'm not like other people in the class who're like really clever.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class?
A: Probably another girl called Angela. She's good at basically everything and gets good marks all the time. She doesn't speak that much; she's very quiet but she can do it all on paper.
I: Who is the cleverest person you can think of?
A: I don't know... There are some very clever people like someone called Mary. She's very clever.
I: Why do you think that person is so clever?
A: By the marks she gets.
I: Is it the same being clever at German as being good at German?
A: No, being good at German is like being good at all aspects of German. Like you have the confidence to speak and write things down too. Being clever means you're good at everything... I don't think many clever people are good at sports. I don't know why it just seems to be that way. All these clever people are quiet and delicate and things.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to make a special effort or try extra hard?
A: Very important. I think as long as you try hard and do your best then they can't ask for anymore.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't?
A: No, 'cause some people can be just very good at it and not try very hard.
I: So how can people be good when they don't try.
A: I don't know it's just weird. It's just the way it happens.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
A: Try hard.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
A: History, German and my sports lessons.. and music as well.
I: Are they the same reasons why you try hard in all these subjects?
A: No, like in history I really want to know about them - I'm really interested in it. And music 'cause I like music.
I: And German?
A: Because I enjoy doing the subject.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
A: If I had more things to go for. If I thought in later life I could do something with it.
I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?
A: Probably because I can't be bothered sometimes, like because the lesson you've had such an awful lesson you just don't want to do it.
I: Is this our fault or someone else's fault?
A: No, I think it's my fault. I mean especially if I've had an argument then I just don't want to do it.
I: Are there any other reasons why you don't do well sometimes in German?
A: Well, if you haven't put the effort into learning something. One time I wanted to go out with my friends - I didn't get such a good mark then.
I: Could a reason ever be that the work is too difficult?
A: I don't really think the work is ever too difficult. The only thing could be that sometimes when we listen to the tape you can't understand because the Germans talk too fast.

I: So do you ever not do well in those situations?

A: Not really, I usually like get just like wrong or something.

I: Why's that? Because you made an effort to understand?

A: Yeah, I mean I can't hear it or I just catch a few words - I try. I put down what I think. I always put down the answers.

I: What, you never leave it blank?

A: No.

I: Could it ever be a reason that others don't help you?

A: That happens in Art. My teacher doesn't help me and I get so frustrated.

I: Does that happen in German?

A: No.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?
A: On one of my big exams, I suppose. I'm not very good at writing and putting things down. I tried my best on the paper but I just ... wanted to get a higher mark and it sort of made me feel a bit upset.

I: Did you know when you handed the paper in that you hadn't done so well?

A: I sort of had the feeling I didn't but I didn't think like I'd done badly in that test. I thought there could be a chance ... I didn't get a bad mark, but it wasn't the mark I wanted. I wanted a higher mark.

I: What was the reason for that? You said you tried your hardest.

A: I know but sometimes I think my hardest isn't good enough.

I: So what's the reason if your hardest isn't good enough?

A: Well, I don't find things as easy as I did like in Year 7. German was just so easy to me. I just think it's the years going up.

I: So was it a bit more difficult?

A: Yeah.

I: Right then. When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

A: Up to me.

I: Completely?

A: Em... I think so yeah but sometimes I think, "Oh, Miss didn't tell us to do this and that. But it's basically up to me.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages?

A: I don't....I mean it's important to me but I don't sometimes think... you have to take a language. You've got to choose one but sometimes you just take a language but you don't do anything with it. Sometimes it's like not that important to people.

I: Is it important to you?

A: It's quite important. I just don't think I'll do anything with it. I mean I could go to Germany and speak it but I don't think I'd use it in my job because I want to do other things.

I: What do you want to do?

A: I want to do something like singing or acting - I love all that.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

A: Yeah

I: What could you do to do better?

A: Try and give more effort. Instead of giving 100%, give 110%. Also my Mum helps me at home. She sort of tests me on things. I could do more of that.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before? When did you change?

A: I didn't really think about it at all. At primary school we had a bit of French and I hated it.

I: When you found out you were going to study German what did you think?

A: Great I'm getting away from French.

I: Has the way you think about German changed at all?

A: Yeah. Like in Year 7 I thought - Oh German I'll probably do that for a year but I
want to learn more now.

I: Right - thank you very much. That's it.
INTERVIEW 16

Interviewee characteristics:

School: B
Age: 13 years and 03 months
Gender: Female
Band: Low
Languages: 4 years
Name: Christine

I = Interviewer; C= Christine

I: What do you do in foreign language lessons?
C: Well we learn vocabulary. We do some pair work. We read French from a book ...
I: Do you listen to tapes?
C: Oh yeah we listen to tapes.
I: And writing?
C: Yeah but it's basically copying, using words that you've learnt.
I: What aspects of foreign language lessons do you enjoy the most?
C: pair work.
I: Why's that?
C: I suppose you can talk to your friends as well as learning French.
I: And you talk to them in French?
C: Well sometimes.
I: And the least?
C: Writing, I find it quite hard.
I: Give them a mark out of 10 for enjoyment?
A: 8.
I: How well do you think you are doing in foreign languages?
C: I'm not the best but I'm not the worst.
I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how well you think you are doing.
C: 6 1/2.
I: What do you have to do well in foreign languages?
C: I don't know I suppose use your brain.
I: Anything else?
C: Listen, don't play around in lessons.
I: How can you tell how well you are doing in foreign languages?
C: I suppose when we have tests and we have our marks back we can tell like the highest person has the highest mark.
I: If the teacher didn't tell you how well you were doing, would you still know?
C: No.
I: Not at all?
C: No.
I: When you do well in foreign languages, what are main reasons?
C: Suppose that's a difficult question.
I: Sometimes do you do really well?
C: Sometimes I'm not doing very well and sometimes I'm working really hard.
I: So why is it that sometimes you don't do very well and other times you do well what causes that?
C: I don't know...
I: Some people say that some people are just could good at language. Could that be a reason?
C: No.
I: Some people say that when they do well it's because they do well it's because they tried much harder?
C: Yeah, that's true.
I: Is that a reason?
C: Well sometimes they just don't bother cause they're not in the mood for it. And sometimes people do well because they're keen. We have gold stars so most people want gold stars?
I: Does this describe you?
C: No.
I: Trying hard, is that something that you think makes you do well?
C: Yeah.
I: Do you ever try hard and not do well?
C: No.
I: You've been learning French for 4 years. Do you think that's important for you doing well?
C: Well when I was at my other school I wasn't pushed. And there was lots of classes that stopped and started again. So we had to go the whole way back to the beginning again and I never got anywhere. So really I've only been pushed enough for 2 years.
I: So who's pushing you?
C: Some of it I'm pushing myself and some of it's my teacher. She pushes like goes from 1 subject when she thinks we've got it into our heads she moves onto the next subjects.
I: Some people say that when they do well it's because other people helps them like parents, teacher friends. Is that sometimes a reason for you doing well?
C: My mother did a course in French so she sometimes helps me in my French homework. But she doesn't do it I have to do it she gives me ideas.
I: Do you think that helps you do well?
C: Yeah.
I: What about your teacher and your friends are they important?
C: The teacher helps you. Like when you've got I wrong. They put the answer there so you can have a look back at it and then give the right answer.

I: Another reason why people say they do well is because the work is easy. Is that ever a reason why you'd do well?

C: If the work is easy but it isn't.

I: So ever when the work is difficult you do well sometimes?

C: I try harder.

I: Trying harder does that make it easier?

C: It's still difficult but you're using your brain a bit more.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you did really well at foreign languages?

C: It was year 7 and I had a test it was a writing one. And it was out of 16 and I had 15 1/2.

I: When you did it, did you know when you finished it that you'd done well?

C: No.

I: So was it a surprise ...

C: yeah it was a surprise when I got my paper back.

I: How did you explain to yourself how well you'd done?

C: I suppose I revise more than I usually did.

I: Is doing well up to you or someone else?

C: Up to me.

I: Completely?

C: Yeah.

I: Do you think that you are good at foreign languages?

C: No.

I: Give yourself a mark out of 10 for how good you think you are.

C: 5.

I: Could you have someone who is good at foreign languages but doesn't do well?

C: Yeah some people eh.. they are good in French their friends won't call them a *** or something.

I: Do you know anyone like this?

C: I used to know a person at my old school.

I: Could this describe you?

C: No.

I: Could you have someone who was doing well at foreign languages but wasn't very good at it?

C: I suppose the person could my really hard and at the end of it they could find they just haven't done anything, so they give up.

I: So are they doing well?

C: Well they try really hard and do really well. And then they find that they're not
getting better and they're not very good at French. And then they give up.

I: Describe them if you know them.

C: No.

I: Could this describe you?

C: No.

I: Tell me something else you are really good at in School. Why?

C: Music.

I: Why's that?

C: Well I used to play the recorder and now I play the cello.

I: So why are you good at that?

C: I suppose I know the notes off the recorder and can compose, I know what music's about.

I: Tell me something else that you are really good at out of School. Why?

C: I can't think of anything.

I: How important is it to be clever in foreign languages in order to do well?

C: Difficult question.

I: What does being clever mean?

C: I don't know.

I: Do you think they're clever people in your French language class?

C: No.

I: Do you know any clever people?

C: Only very sarcastic people. That they can just have a sarcastic remark straight away like if someone said something to them they would just have a little line that just snapped back at them.

I: Does that mean they're clever?

C: I don't know ...

I: Is it possible for somebody to be clever at one thing and not clever at something else?

C: Yes.

I: Are you clever?

C: I don't know I've never really thought of it.

I: Would you say you were clever at music?

C: No, well I'm not really dumb at music.

I: Are you clever at French?

C: No.

I: Can you think of anyone who's clever at French?

C: The teachers.

I: How can you tell the teachers are clever?
C: I suppose the way they teach us the French and the way they say it to us.
I: Who is the cleverest person in your class? How can you tell?
C: Suppose could be Trixy.
I: How can you tell?
C: She's always got her hand up, she always finishes her work first.
I: Why's she clever?
C: I don't anybody's just the cleverest that they're marvelous and everything's right. I don't think that's possible.
I: If you want to do well in foreign languages, how important is it to try extra hard?
C: A lot.
I: Is there anything that's more important?
C: No.
I: Do you think that people who try hard will always do better than people who don't? Even if they are not as clever.
P: Yes.
I: Even if the person who doesn't try hard is very cleverer than the person who does?
C: Depends what they're clever at.
I: If they're clever at French and they're not trying hard and somebody else isn't as clever but they're trying hard. Who'll do better?
C: The one that's trying hard - not clever.
I: Is it more important to try hard or to be clever?
C: Trying hard.
I: Is there a connection between trying hard and being hard?
C: No.
I: What lessons do you try hardest in?
C: Music and Geography.
I: Why is that?
C: I've got a teacher that's not very nice in Geography, so that's why I try hard.
I: So why does that make you try hard?
C: Because people are scared of him.
I: What would make you try harder in foreign languages?
C: A strict teacher.
I: So if your French teacher was your Geography teacher, would you try harder?
C: Yes.
I: How can you try harder?
C: I don't really know.
I: If you do badly in foreign languages, what are the main reasons?

C: Maybe there's something on my mind or I'm scared that something's going to happen later on like a test.

I: Some people say that the reason they don't do well is because it's too difficult. Is that a reason?

C: No, cause they could always try harder.

I: Is the reason that you sometimes don't do well that you don't try hard enough?

C: Yeah.

I: Why don't you try harder?

C: I don't know.

I: Can you tell me about a time when you didn't do well in foreign languages?

C: It was a few weeks ago actually when I was eh, Chris was talking to me; really annoying me and I was jostling around and he decided to say something really horrible. I can't remember about it was so I decided to flick ink at him. So I did and I got a detention. And that's the first detention I've had in my life.

I: Why didn't you do well?

C: Chris.

I: So it was nothing to do with you?

C: No.

I: Any other reasons?

C: I suppose it was boring.

I: Was that because of you?

C: Yeah I just couldn't be bothered because it was so boring.

I: When you do badly in foreign languages is it mainly to do with you or someone else?

C: mainly to do with me.

I: Is it important for you to do well in foreign languages. Why?

C: Depends what you want to do with your life if you want to be a language - teacher it is important. But I want to be a music teacher so I don't really need it.

I: Could you do better in foreign languages?

C: Yeah.

I: What could you do to do better?

C: Try harder, listen, do your homework and maybe look over what you're learnt in previous years.

I: Did you think differently about foreign languages before?

C: No, I really wanted to do French. I wanted to try hard and when I came here I went more to music than French. I enjoy French still but not as much.
## Appendix J

### A suggested questionnaire for future research

Name: ___________________  Language: _________  Age: _________

Think of a situation where you didn’t do well in a foreign language lesson. Now describe the situation on the lines below.

Now say why you think you didn’t do well. You may write up to 3 reasons. Write each of your reasons in the boxes along the top of the table below. Finally, answer the questions in the left-hand column by ticking one box for each reason you give.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write your reasons here</th>
<th>One reason I did well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I did well is because</th>
<th>Another reason I did well is because</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this reason because of you?</td>
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<td>☐ Yes</td>
<td>☐ Yes</td>
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<td>☐ Yes, a bit</td>
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<th>Is this reason because of someone or something else?</th>
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<th>Could you have done anything about this?</th>
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<th>Could anyone else have done anything about this?</th>
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<th>Would this be a reason in similar situations in the future?</th>
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<th>Does this reason explain other situations in lessons?</th>
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