Learning by Talking

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Comprehending and Analysing the Pupils’ Thoughts and Experiences about Speaking English for Second Language Acquisition
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to find out the pupils’ thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition in upper secondary school. We want to establish that oral communication is an important factor towards fulfilling the criteria to strive for in developing the pupils’ knowledge and skills in language learning according to the *Curriculum for Compulsory School System* (Skolverket, 2006) and the *Syllabus for the English Subject* (Skolverket, 2001).

The background presents theoretical approaches in second language acquisition, such as Vygostskij’s, Piaget’s and Krashen’s theories of language acquisition. Communicative competence, affective factors, strategies and speech-codes used in the learning process have also been briefly described in this study.

The methods used for collecting data were observations and interviews, with a qualitative survey and hermeneutic approach in focus. The research took place in three different schools in a municipality in southwest of Sweden. For the observations, there were 71 pupils participating in this study and 37 pupils wanted to collaborate for the interviews. No teacher or school workers were involved or participated in the observations or interviews. We wanted to keep the pupils’ point of view about how they use verbal language skills in English to gain knowledge about the target language.
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Last but not least, we would like to dedicate this study to all educators at the University of Borås that we have come across during our journey towards becoming teachers.

Foreword

The word I forgot
Which one I wished to say
And voiceless thought
Returns to shadows’ chamber

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 6
  1.2 Aim .................................................................................................................. 7
  1.3. Definitions of Concepts .............................................................................. 7
    1.3.1. Communication ..................................................................................... 7
    1.3.2. Second Language Acquisition ............................................................ 7
    1.3.3. Formal learning ..................................................................................... 7
    1.3.4. Informal learning .................................................................................... 7

2. BACKGROUND ........................................................................................................ 8
  2.1. The Curriculum and the Syllabuses ............................................................. 8
  2.2. Second Language Acquisition .................................................................... 9
    2.2.1. Theories of Language Acquisition ....................................................... 10
  2.3. Learning a second language ...................................................................... 13
    2.3.1. Formal and Informal Learning .............................................................. 14
    2.3.2. Affective Factors in Learning ................................................................. 16
  2.4. Communicative competence ..................................................................... 17
    2.4.1 The Dialogical Classroom ........................................................................ 19
    2.4.2. Communication in the Classroom ......................................................... 20

3. METHOD .................................................................................................................. 21
  3.1. Respondents ................................................................................................... 22
  3.2. Approach and Tools ..................................................................................... 22
  3.3. Ethics .............................................................................................................. 23
  3.4. Quality and Validity ...................................................................................... 24

4. RESULTS .................................................................................................................. 25
  4.1. Observations .................................................................................................. 25
    4.1.1. Observation in Sixth Grade ................................................................. 25
    4.1.2. Observation in Seventh Grade ............................................................ 26
    4.1.3. Observation in Ninth Grade ................................................................. 27
  4.2. Interviews ....................................................................................................... 28
    4.2.1. Interview in Sixth Grade ....................................................................... 28
    4.2.2. Interview in Seventh Grade ................................................................. 30
    4.2.3. Interview in Ninth Grade ....................................................................... 31
  4.3. Summary of Result ......................................................................................... 33

5. DISCUSSION .......................................................................................................... 34
  5.1. Discussion of Result ....................................................................................... 34
  5.2. Discussion of Methods ................................................................................... 40

6. CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................... 41
  6.1. Didactical Consequences ............................................................................. 41
  6.2. Proposal for future research ......................................................................... 44

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 45
APPENDIX .................................................................................................................. 49
1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a multicultural world where it is not enough knowing how to express ourselves in our mother tongue. Living in an international society requires that one speaks at least two languages. Through language we are able to express our opinions, feelings, make statements, reflect and analyse the environment around us. Informally we are in contact with the English language before schooling, through music, television, the Internet and films. However, the first formal contact with English is in school.

Swedish pupils start learning English as their second language around second or third grade. According to the *Curriculum for the Compulsory School System* (Skolverket, 2006) the pupils should be encouraged to take every chance to communicate verbally, whether in their mother tongue or in their second language of choice:

...The school has the task of imparting fundamental values and promoting pupils’ learning in order to prepare them to live and work in society. It should therefore impart the more unvarying forms of knowledge that constitute the common frame of reference that all in society need.

(Skolverket, 2006, p. 5)

Many theories of language acquisition emphasize the importance of dialogue in language learning (Dysthe, 1996 & Viberg, 1992). During our Academic Vocational Training, we have noticed that pupils and teachers speak very little English during lessons in the purpose of developing language skills. The reasons might be many, such as, the teachers choose not to speak English and consequently the pupils do not feel motivated or encouraged to use it either. Another reason can be that the pupils are uncomfortable and insecure using English as a common way of communication in the classroom, since they do not use their skills and knowledge in authentic situations during lessons. No matter the reason, teachers should make sure that the pupils “receive support in their language and communicative development” (Skolverket, 2006, p. 13).
1.2 Aim
On the basis of the pupils’ point of view in upper secondary school, the purpose of this study is to find out their personal thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition. The questions this study is based on are:

- How important do the pupils believe it is to speak English during lessons for second language acquisition?
- In which way do the pupils believe they learn to speak English best?
- During which activities do the pupils use English in the classroom?

1.3. Definitions of Concepts

1.3.1. Communication
Communication is the verbal or non-verbal interaction between two people. Communicative competence is the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts. It is a primary tool in social- and bonding interaction (Brown, 2000).

1.3.2. Second Language Acquisition
Second language acquisition is the process by which people learn languages in addition to their native language(s) (Cook, 2002).

1.3.3. Formal learning
Formal learning is the settings where a direct language instruction is provided in the classroom. Both cognitive and affective variables operate directly in formal contexts where the focus is on the teaching language skills (Robinson, 2002).

1.3.4. Informal learning
Informal learning is the language acquisition contexts where learning is incidental to some other activity, as when one acquires and increases his knowledge of the language from friends or co-workers during interactions with them (Robinson, 2002).
2. BACKGROUND

An overview of theories and theoretical concepts that underline the aim of our study will be described in the following chapter. We want to establish that verbal communication is an important factor towards fulfilling the criteria to strive for in developing the pupils’ knowledge and skills in language learning according to the *Curriculum for Compulsory School System* (Skolverket, 2006) and the *Syllabus for the English Subject* (Skolverket, 2001).

2.1. The Curriculum and the Syllabuses

What educational purposes should a school seek to attain?
What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain those purposes?
How can the educational experiences be effectively organized?
How can we determine whether these purposes have been attained?

(Tyler, 1949, in Nunan, 2001, p.55)

The Curriculum and Syllabuses used in the Swedish school system today have been influenced by the theory brought forward by the scientist Vygotskij and his view on language learning as a social constructive mechanism (Evenshaug & Hallen, 2001). The *Curriculum for the Compulsory School System* (Skolverket, 2006) is the written approach about what the school organizations in Sweden should look upon and strive towards according to the Swedish government. This document is based on the integrity of the individuals, the equal value between women and men, solidarity and people’s inviolability (Skolverket, 2006). The Curriculum emphasizes that all subjects should provide motivation, encourage creativeness in order to increase the pupils desire for further learning (Skolverket, 2006). On the other hand, the *Syllabuses for the compulsory school* (Skolverket, 2001) are guidelines for teaching. For each subject in school there are goals to achieve in its role in education (Skolverket, 2001). After completing schooling, the pupils should be able to develop their knowledge on their own (Skolverket, 2001; Skolverket, 2006).

According to the Curriculum (Skolverket, 2006) the school should strive towards developing pupils curiosity and the desire to learn by being confident in their abilities and understand that everyone has a different way of acquiring knowledge. Further, school should prepare the pupils for the future by increasing their knowledge in different subjects and areas; such as,
knowing how to communicate in a foreign language in a rich and varied way and enhancing confidence in their own abilities (Skolverket, 2006).

The ability to use English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds. The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills /.../ The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures. All pupils need to be prepared so that on their own they can further develop their knowledge after completing schooling. The subject thus also aims at pupils maintaining and developing their desire and ability to learn English. (Skolverket, 2001, p.11)

According to Applebee (1996), curriculums are based on traditions, social context, values and prevailing norms that look back on what has been done in education until now, instead of looking forward. Further, “/…/ the curriculum needs to be rethought in order to foster students’ entry into living traditions of knowledge-in-action rather than static traditions of knowledge-out-of-context” (Applebee, 1996, p.5). The English subject should not be divided into separate elements to be learnt and having a pre-determined way of teaching in school (Skolverket, 2001). To increase the pupils’ competences and skills it is important to create and provide authentic situations where they can develop their English knowledge in different contexts and situations (Skolverket, 2001).

2.2. Second Language Acquisition
In the beginning of the 20th century structuralism and behaviourism were the leading ideas among linguists. But during the 1960s and 1970s these ideas changed when rationalism and cognitive psychology started to become the focus in language learning. Another idea that influenced language acquisition was constructivism in the 1980s (Brown, 2000). By the late 1960s, second language acquisition began to be studied in very similar ways as first language acquisition. Learners were seen as intelligent and creative beings instead of producers of malformed, imperfect language full of mistakes (Brown, 1994).
In the 1970s, the term communicative competence was introduced. The importance of knowing how to communicate in a second language increased and second language education changed in Sweden. Communication skills, mostly oral, were now a part of language teaching. Instead of focusing on the grammar of the language, the education should be more about pupils’ abilities to use the language; the new strategy for learning a second language should be to communicate with others in the target language (Brown, 1994).

Theories of second language acquisition suggest that within the learners and the learning situation there is more than just cognitive schedules. Personality and affective factors such as anxiety and motivation have to be considered in learning: “Understanding how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory when it comes to second language acquisition” (Brown, 1994, p. 136). Therefore, second language acquisition should not be seen as a competence a learner develops. It is not located in the learner’s mind but in the dialogical interactions they conduct in socio-cultural contexts (Johnson, 2004). ‘Learners’ perception of their own strengths and weaknesses as language learners can influence the use they make of opportunities available for language learning and the priorities they set for themselves” (Richards and Lockhart, 1994, p.56).

2.2.1. Theories of Language Acquisition

The Behaviouristic approach defines learning as a way of changing behaviour by creating a habit of doing something. Behaviourists believe that language learning is no different from any other kind of learning. The interaction through imitation of the speech learners hear, practice and receive feedback from an adult, reinforces their desire of reproducing a language outcome (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). These interactions help the learners to understand when they produce correct language structures. The interactions can either be done through positive encouragement on well-produced utterances, or through feedback on mistakes they make. These interactions are known as *Verbal Behaviour* (Brown, 1994, p.22). Learners are as passive beings that learn through hearing and imitating. Learning a language is no different from acquiring other knowledge, it happens by stimuli and responses (Skinner, 2002).

The Cognitive approach claims that there is a link between thinking and cognition. When learners are exposed to new experiences and put these experiences in use, it will lead to
cognitive development; thus, the cognitive development leads to a linguistic development and so forth to a linguistic interaction (Svensson, 1998). According to Piaget (1972) thought comes before the language and interaction with the environment. Activities in the learners’ life contribute to individual development. Therefore, the inner thought comes before the learners’ ability of expressing themselves in speech (Piaget, 1972). Vygotskij, on the contrary, means that language comes before thought (Vygotskij, 1986). To be able to develop, learners need to create different forms of social activity, which later will be made into inner experiences of consequence for the learners continuing progress (Vygotskij, 1986). Vygotskij (1986) refers to the *Proximal Developing Zone* being the learners’ ability of using what they already know and can do, but also what they can accomplish in interaction with others. He also claims that the process of maturity has its role in the developing process but it is not definite (Vygotskij, 1986).

The Constructivist approach is built on Piaget’s theories of the structuralistic thinking. According to this approach learners construct knowledge and meaning from experiences as they learn. In a constructivists classroom, the teacher searches for the pupils’ understandings of concepts, structures and opportunities for pupils to refine or revise their understandings by posing contradictions, presenting new information, asking questions, encouraging research, and/or engaging pupils in inquiries designed to challenge current concepts (Brooks, 1999).

The Nativist approach argues that the ability to learn a language is innate in the biological belief that learners are programmed to learn languages. The most well-known supporter of this approach is Chomsky (Brown, 1994) who argues that the only reasonable explanation for learners to understand the complexity of using language for second language acquisition is across culture; which he called *Syntactic Structures* (Chomsky, 2002). According to Chomsky (2002) all languages share the same principles of grammar. Chomsky suggested that human beings are born with a mechanism called *Language Acquisition Devise* (LAD). Through this mechanism learners develop their language on their own if they are in contact with external imposes. Learners do not acquire language; they develop it through ripening processes, like a blossom when given water (Chomsky, 2002). However, it requires support from the environment (Evenshaug & Hallen, 2001). Further, the learners need to be in contact with language as much as possible through interaction with others and by using the language frequently (Chomsky, 2002).
Krashen’s *Monitor and Input hypothesis* (Krashen, 1987) claims that learners acquire language by understanding messages (learning) or by receiving comprehensible input (acquisition). The Monitor hypothesis defines the influence of the latter on the former, the relationship between acquisition and learning being a result of the learned grammar. According to Krashen, the monitor acts in planning, editing and correcting language function. The Input hypothesis explains how the learners acquire a second language and only points out acquisition, not learning (Krashen, 1987). In this hypothesis, the learners develop when they receive second language input which should be one step beyond their current stage of linguistic competence. However, all learners in a classroom can not be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, and therefore, the natural communicative input should be the key to designing the syllabus, ensuring that they are appropriate for the learners current stage of linguistic competence (Krashen, 1987).

The Learner Autonomy approach assumes that learners accept, take initiative and responsibility for seeking knowledge by planning and carrying out activities in the classroom (Hedge, 2004; Tholin, 2001). The teacher’s role is firstly to provide a good learning environment for the pupils’ and secondly to give support when help is needed. The teacher’s position is not to provide the pupils with definitive knowledge, but to guide them in the search for their own (Tholin, 2001). This approach requires that learners have insight, positive attitude and can reflect on different ways of learning on their own and with others (Hedge, 2004). To learn how to interact with one another, learners should be engaged with the cognitive, metacognitive, social affective and communication strategies (Hedge, 2004). *Cognitive strategy* is the learner’s way of using the existing knowledge for managing the new knowledge, while the *metacognitive strategy* is their self monitoring of planning, thinking and making the new knowledge affective. The *social affective strategy* is the learners’ opportunities for practicing the knowledge, and *communication strategy* is the learners’ cognate communication knowledge in their first language to make themselves understood in the target language (Hedge, 2004).
2.3. Learning a second language

Learning a second language is not the same as learning a mother tongue (Lindberg, 2004). What learners already know about the native language influences their performance in the target language. The learners already have a structure of a language in their mind, which either helps the acquisition of the second language if the languages have similarities, or cause complications if the languages do not have any resemblances at all (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Different languages have different systems, structure, rules, concepts and cultural patterns (Cook, 2002). What the learners should strive for in learning a second language is to become as fluent as native speakers (Cook, 2002). However, this is not a goal reachable to everyone; some learners come very close to achieve fluency as native speakers, others do not make any visible progress (Lindberg, 2004). This phenomenon is known as fossilization and there are two explanations for it: psycholinguistic which means that the language learning mechanism available to a young learner simply ceases to work with age, at least partly and no amount of studies can recreate it, and sociolinguistic meaning that older learners do not have the same social opportunities or motivation to try to identify themselves completely with native speakers (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p.18).

According to Hedge (2004) there are four areas to investigate in second language acquisition. The first is the nature of input where learners receive an input when the language is a level above their understanding (Krashen, 1985, in Hedge, 2004, p.10) or that learners are pre-programmed for language learning from birth (Chomsky, 1965, in Hedge, 2004, p.11). Researches are still arguing today in which way acquisition and learning relate to each other (Hedge, 2004). However, they agree that the input needs to be meaningful and be a level above the learners’ comprehension for developing the target language. It is also important to provide input through authentic situations and encourage learners to seek for these resources in order to increase input opportunities (Hedge, 2004). The teacher also needs to adjust her language usage to the learners’ proficiency (Hedge, 2004).

The second area of investigation is the process of intake, referring to how learners process the input and assimilate language to their inter-language system. According to Hedge (2004) learners develop a linguistic system based on their experiences of second language, to communicate in the target language. The strategies learners use in their first language are to find words to explain what they mean in the target language, since they are not fully
proficient in the second language (Hedge, 2004). Learners can generalize their native language knowledge to help them learn to use the target language, known as language transfer (Johnson, 2004). A positive transfer or facilitation is applied when the relevant unit or structure of both languages is the same and linguistic interference can result in correct language production (Major, 2002, p.75). However, the mistakes a second language learner makes trying to apply rules and forms of the native language into the target language is known as negative transfer or interference (Jordan, 2004, p.168).

The third area of investigation is the role of interaction in the classroom, meaning that learners need to practice producing output, using all the knowledge they already acquired (Hedge, 2004). They also need to negotiate a meaning to make the output comprehensible for all involved in the communication, in order to develop their ability to participate effectively in conversations (Hedge, 2004). At last, the role of error refers to the reflections of the errors learners make in their inter-language development (Hedge, 2004); examples of such mistakes are that learners translate a sentence word by word from their native language and pronounces the phonetic sounds that resemble their native language instead of the phonetics of the target language (Odlin, 1989). Still, there are some mistakes that second language learners make that have not been possible to trace to their native language (Mitchell & Myles 2004). The learners’ progression in learning a second language is dependent of meaningful language practice in a rich environment and a positive feedback from the teacher (Hedge, 2004).

2.3.1. Formal and Informal Learning

Formal learning falls under the learning that takes place during school hours in the classroom. This way of learning is referred to where direct instructions are given, about and in the target language. The one aim is to teach language skills which is done through different methods, such as reading, writing and speaking. Informal learning takes place on other occasions, on contexts as part of a day-to-day life.

Informal learning: the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment- from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.

Learning is a wide term, but can, be divided into two categories; formal and informal learning. The phenomenon of informal learning “/…/ has to be considered allusively” (Garrick, 1998, p.10), for example, if it is not supported by other approaches it can easily be questioned (Garrick, 1998). Learning takes place in daily contexts and experiences which are indeed rich sources of development. Informal learning is mostly built on the oral use of the target language; it begins with learners receiving input, which they can understand. The next essential step in the exchange is communication, when the learners have interpreted information and have an answer it creates an output (Garrick, 1998).

To acquire formal knowledge, learners use many different strategies. These are divided into direct and indirect strategies (Piper, 2001). Direct strategies include memory-, cognitive- and compensation strategies. Memory strategies refer to the learners’ ability of remembering and recalling information about the new language. Cognitive strategies are used to produce and comprehend the target language, and compensation strategies refer to how the learners use the new language even when their knowledge has gaps (Piper, 2001). Indirect strategies include metacognitive-, affective- and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies are the way the learners coordinate their own learning process (Piper, 2001, p.47) and affective strategies are how the learners deal with emotions, attitudes, values and motivations that might influence the learning process (Piper, 2001). Social strategies involve social contexts in learning (Grenfell, 1999).

Time factors are a concern for communication situations. It requires that the learners have the right amount of knowledge to be able to answer fairly quickly, but there also need to be an agreement between the learners and the teacher in the classroom about the time limit to produce the answer (Viberg, 1992). Stress might affect the learning process negatively according to Viberg (1992), who also points out the importance of being in an environment where the target language is heard and used. Viberg gives an example where foreigners have Swedish as a second language and are constantly in contact with it since they are living in Sweden, in this case the learning inevitably takes place both formally and informally.
2.3.2. Affective Factors in Learning

Motivation is an important aspect to be considered when learning a second language. It can determine success or failure in any learning situation (Van Lier, 1996). According to Dörnyei (2001) motivation does not exist, it is a theoretical concept used to describe and explain how people think and behave. The term motivation is also used for explaining why the learner did or did not gain knowledge; without the need to go into detail about what factors have contributed to their commitment, the teacher can simply say “Because they are motivated” or “They are not motivated” (Dörnyei, 2001, p.6). By using the word motivation, theoreticians and researchers can easier relate to the most basic aspects of our mind, which are wills, desires, rational thinking and feelings; thus, our cognitive and affective functions (Dörnyei, 2001). However, the learners’ attitudes are not enough to support motivation in learning (MacIntyre, 2002). In second language acquisition, it does not matter how gifted the learners are in their native tongue, they can still find it difficult or even impossible to learn the new language (Dörnyei, 2001). Learning a second language takes commitment and persistence from the learners and is the key to succeed in the process of learning a second language (MacIntyre, 2002).

According to Dörnyei (2001) motivation can be identified through three sets of components during the learning situation. The first is course-specific motivational components meaning that the learners’ interest and needs are in relevance to their expectations, success and satisfaction in the outcome. These are related to syllabus, teaching materials, teaching methods and learning tasks. The second is teacher-specific motivational components and concerns the motivational impact of the teacher’s personality, behaviour and teaching style contra autonomy-supporting, direct socialisation of motivation such as modelling, task presentation and feedback. The third is group-specific motivational components which relates to the characteristics of the learners’ group cohesiveness, classroom goals structure as cooperative, competitive or individualistic (Dörnyei, 2001). The meaning of motivation depends on the perception of human nature that is used and in which context (Van Lier, 1996), but also on the teacher’s supporting the learners’ motivation (Chambers, 1999).

Anxiety is another important aspect in second language acquisition. It is “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p.125). Anxiety can have both negative (debilitating anxiety) and positive (facilitating anxiety) effects, which motivates and
facilitates, disrupts and inhibits cognitive actions in learning (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p.172). According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991) anxiety can be divided in three parts, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. These are related to academic and social evaluation situations and can be defined as a type of shyness characterized by fear of, or anxiety about speaking in front of peers, negative feedback evaluation by peers and teacher and language testing situations (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1991).

Anxiety is often related to a sense of threat to the learners’ self concept in the learning situation. If learners fear being laughed at for making a mistake, it can hinder them of behaving as they usually do and consequently, it causes emotional stress and lower self-esteem and self-confidence (MacIntyre, 2002; Allwright & Bailey, 1991). However, anxiety plays an important role in the development of a second language, because no matter how accomplished the learners are, they are likely to experience at least some degree of anxiety over their own levels of language proficiency (De Bot, Lowie & Vespoor, 2005). Possible symptoms caused by second language anxiety include forgetfulness, avoidance of speaking the language, less interaction with people, low self-esteem, low-confidence, and feeling unsure of ones abilities (MacIntyre, 2002).

2.4. Communicative competence

According to Barber (2000) speech is learned before writing and oral communication is the oldest form of communication. The languages we are familiar with today have taken a long time to develop (Barber, 2000). Linguists have a theory that the most primitive form of communication was people imitating sounds around them, such as “bang, cuckoo splash” (Aitchison, 1991, p.180). Communication is often referred to as the driving force in a relationship, or the most complex but essential tool for connecting with one and other. Communicative competence is measured by how well people use language to understand, make themselves understood and exchange information with a native speaker (Savignon, 2002). It also means to exchange information, thoughts, knowledge, and opinions and also to interact for understanding each other (Johnson, 1999).
The structure and function of communication is limited to a restricted language which is normally induced by social relations. There are two usages of language, *restricted language* and *formal language* (Bernstein, 2003). These languages are spoken in different groups in society, for example, the public language would be used by the working class and formal language practised within the middleclass. Generating a restricted language for communication, society may place different values on the orders of the experiences elicited, maintaining and progressively strengthening through the different language systems and its inhibited codes (Bernstein, 2003).

According to Bernstein (2003) the language groups inhibit different intonations and codes as well as verbal expressions. “Language is considered one of the most important means of initiating, synthesizing, and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour which are functionally related to the social group” (Bernstein, 2003, p.43). The relationship between roles and the language is what explains the phenomenon that learners can write in an elaborated way but are not able to speak on the same level; for they may not be able to face requirements of the role. Bernstein also claims that different forces influence the development of elaborated and restricted language. They affect the culture and the role systems of the major socializing agencies, such as family and school. Social class position controls the occupational function of a language (Bernstein, 2003).

Nowadays, having knowledge about a second language is essential for global interaction, thus, it is not completely out of place to make mistakes as a second language learner (Savignon, 2002). The most important thing is to make oneself understood (Savignon, 2002). In these cases it could be essential to be corrected by the native speaker or the teacher (Savignon, 2002). Communicative competence can not be seen as a method to be used in the classroom, but something that comes spontaneously and makes it possible to interact with other speakers of whatever the language may be (Savignon, 2002). Savignon (2002) claims that communicative competence does not exclude facial expressions and gestures, which are called non-verbal communication.


2.4.1 The Dialogical Classroom

According to Freire (1970) the essence of the dialogue is the word, in which we find reflection and action. A dialogue requires critical thinking, and only then can critical thinking be generated and learning reached. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education (Freire, 1970). Through dialogue we can influence each others ways of being (Dysthe, 1996). According to van der Lindenagger (2004), dialogue is how human relationships should be formed; equal, respectful and authentically interested of the participants. One aspect of dialogue in the classroom is that the teacher speaks to the class as a group, with one individual or when the pupils speak among themselves (Dysthe, 1996).

To understand what a dialogical classroom is, we need to contrast it with a monological classroom. The characteristics of a monological lesson is one way communication, which means, the dialogue starts from whom knows (the teacher) to whom does not know (the pupil) (Dysthe, 1996). In this way of teaching, what is important is to pass forward knowledge; what will be taught is decided before the lesson starts with no connection to the pupils’ pre-knowledge or experiences (Dysthe, 1996). The basic aspect in the dialogical classroom is that pupils and the teacher find a meaning for learning together (Dysthe, 1996).

It is important for the pupils to be secure and have confidence in order to feel that they have something to contribute with in the classroom conversations; and the best way of doing this is through dialogue with the teacher and amongst the pupils (Dysthe, 1996). Dysthe (1996), as well as Nystrand (1997), emphasize the importance of each and every voice in the classroom as a source of learning and building knowledge on each others opinions. According to Dysthe (1996) the dialogical way of learning creates many opportunities for the pupils to expand their knowledge in several areas; not only about knowledge in the subject but also about understanding and acceptance for others opinions and thoughts. Dysthe (1996) also emphasizes the importance of making each pupils’ knowledge available for the other participants in the dialogue. “The dialogical classroom is a classroom where the teacher’s voice is one of many listened to, where the pupils also learn from each other and where oral and written usage of the language is in focus for the learning process” (Dysthe, 1996, p. 13, our own translation).
2.4.2. Communication in the Classroom

Spending time in school will show that sustained silence in a classroom is rare to find. “The head component of education is said to be communication” (Johnson 1999, p.13). Communication is taking place constantly, whether verbal or non-verbal, digital or through pieces of paper being sent around. To communicate is one of humans’ basic desires (Johnson, 1999). According to Kitson (1997) language primarily develops through purposeful use, such as talking with parents, teachers and classmates and expressing these ideas denotes that they are understood. Most importantly language contributes to cognitive development (Kitson, 1997) which is the key component to communicative competence (Hedge, 2004).

According to Hedge (2004) there are five competences the learners should develop during the learning process. The First is **linguistic competence** which is knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structure and sentence structure and is an integral part of communicative competence. **Pragmatic competence** involves three different kinds of abilities: illocutionary competence (how to use a language), illocutionary forces (things around that influence learning) and sociolinguistic competence (knowing how to use a language with different people). The third is **discourse competence** which means knowing, as a native speaker, how to maintain the conversation and take it to further levels and acquiring language strategies, as a second language speaker, where you take initiatives, interrupt or enter a conversation. **Strategic competence** is knowing how to cope in a communicative situation, where the communicative strategies are important and **fluency competence** is the speakers ability to, without interruptions or hesitations, link propositions and speech acts, words and syntactic constituents and linking speech segments (Hedge, 2004, p.46-52).

According to Kitson (1997) the talk of teachers has a far-reaching influence since it is a method for classroom organisation and control; a medium for socialisation and culture and also a way of encountering the curriculum. Classroom-related communication gives opportunities to explain what one thinks and knows if it is a secure environment (Kitson, 1997). Johnson (1999) argues that lately employees in the school organisation have been so preoccupied delivering the curricula that the focus on how it is delivered has been neglected. Further, “effective teaching depends on successful communication” (Johnson, 1999, p.4), which is best gained if both the teacher and the pupils are open for taking in nonverbal and verbal signals. The nonverbal form is the easiest form of communication to send and receive messages accurately, but also an important asset to verbal communication (Johnson, 1999).
The classroom should be a tool for transmitting those messages between the sender and receiver and the environment in the classroom has great importance for learning to happen (Johnson, 1999). Firstly the classroom should provide stimuli and motivation; secondly a feeling of security and safety to expressions and finally the classroom should emphasize individuality and provide privacy (Johnson, 1999). If these visions are achieved the environment for communication is as good as it can be and there should be great development in the classroom (Johnson, 1999). According to Hedge (2004) it is in the learners’ best interest to be put in situations where they need to make themselves understood, by speaking slowly, repeating their ideas or clarifying them through rephrasing. The principle of interaction between learners pushes them to produce appropriate language, enabling them to learn from each other (Hedge, 2004). According to Gass (1997) the importance of linguistic input and communicative interaction has been recognized as central for the development of a second language. To be able to use the language fluently in real life, learners need to be given opportunities to learn and practise the language in classroom situations (Hedge, 2004). If the teacher tries to communicate with the pupils on several levels, such as nonverbal, verbal, and cultural, possibly all the pupils will be reached on some level, which is far better than none at all (Gaies, 1983). In classroom situations the teacher is the prime source of linguistic input (Gaies, 1983), and therefore, he should try to communicate with the pupils on several levels, such as nonverbal and verbal (Gaies, 1983).

3. METHOD

The aim of this study is to find out the pupils’ personal thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition. Therefore, we have chosen the qualitative survey method for collecting data, since it provides space for respondents' thoughts, ideas and approaches (Lantz, 1993). To get a broad view of our aim, we have chosen to work with group interview¹ and observation as an informative collecting tool.

The observations were done by writing continuous notes. Three groups of pupils were observed at two different occasions during a lesson of 40 minutes each. According to Lökken & Söbstad (1995) it is not recommended to do observations at only one occasion, since it is difficult to keep focus. The interviews were done in groups of four or five pupils

¹ See Appendix
participating in each group. Kihlström (2007) claims an interview is a tool that makes it easier for people to open up and be honest in their responses. It is also a good way of having an open dialogue about the subject in focus. We did a stratified selection (Björkdahl Ordell, 2007) choosing who would participate in the interviews, which means that we hand picked the respondents suitable for the aim of our study.

Qualitative analysis should be based on the similarities and differences that emerge from the interview material for being able to come to a conclusion of the context in focus in the research. Through qualitative analysis, a new theory can emerge (Lantz, 1993). Based on what we have seen, we want to find out the pupils personal thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition; if they feel motivated to use the target language as a communication and a learning tool in school nowadays.

3.1. Respondents

The study was made among pupils in secondary school during the autumn of 2008. It took place in three different schools in a municipality in southwest of Sweden. For the observations, there were 15 pupils in sixth grade, 30 pupils in seventh grade and 26 pupils in ninth grade participating in this study. The same amount of pupils were interviewed in the sixth grade; 10 pupils in seventh and 12 pupils in ninth grade wanted to collaborate for the interviews. No teacher or school workers were involved or participated in the observations or interviews. We wanted to keep the pupil’s point of view about how they use verbal language skills in English to gain knowledge about the target language.

3.2. Approach and Tools

In our study the hermeneutic scientific approach is the method used for interpretation. Hermeneutics is based on the interpretation of texts; meaning that the conclusion or the phenomenon of the research leads to the culture, time and person-bound about the respondents (Lantz, 1993). Therefore, the data collected is not precise knowledge to be analysed, since it can change over time. Hermeneutics works well together with a qualitative analysis target open interview form (Lantz, 1993) which is the method we chose to collect data.
Observation was one of the tools used for collecting data for this study. According to Kihlström (2007) observation is something we find ourselves doing whether we want it or not and it is one way of seeing something familiar in another perspective. However, an observation is only valid when we prepare ourselves before doing it (Johansson & Svedner, 2006). During the observations made for this study we took notes and therefore our observation can be classified as a continuous structured protocol (Kihlström, 2007).

Another tool used in this study was group interviews. This tool has its focus on the content and composition of the group (Gillham, 2005). This is a way of collecting empirical data which searches for opinions and conflicts that might not surface in individual interviews (Gillham, 2005). An interview is supposed to be simple conversations between the researcher and the respondents, however, an interview has an aim, a special focus to be analysed (Lantz, 2007). A list of questions was prepared outlining the aim of this study. We chose to work with direct interview form which means asking the appropriate questions that will distinguish the direction of the interview in order to reach a qualitative analysis (Lantz, 1993). According to Kihlström (2007), the interview becomes a story and therefore it is important to use quotes to make the interview reliable. Firstly because of the difference of pre-knowledge the respondents have about the subject and secondly because our interviewing skills increase after each preformed interview (Lantz, 2007).

### 3.3. Ethics

Before we began the study we sent a letter of approval to the pupils and parents involved. In the letter we briefly described and explained the purpose of our study. According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002) researchers should follow the guidelines of good ethics, fulfil its claims and keep the purpose of the study clear. The four main claims are stated below with our own translation:

- **Claim of Information:** the researcher shall inform the concerned about the aim of the study.
- **Claim of Approval:** the participants in the study are the main decision takers about their participation. And in cases of under aged persons an approval from the parents is highly important.

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2 See Appendix
• Claim of Confidentiality: the participants should have highest confidentiality as possible and unauthorized readers should not be available.

• Claim of Use: the data should and can only be used for the purpose of the study.

(Vetenskapsrådet, 2002)

We respected the decision of our respondents to participate or not. Their privacy and identity are confidential to the fullest since we gave the pupils fictitious names in this study; and, the gathered information will not be used in any other purposes than to achieve the aim of this research. By considering the claims above, this study can be available for future researchers to take part of the outcome and results (Kihlström, 2007).

3.4. Quality and Validity

For this study to be valid and reliable we used certain methods for collecting the information necessary. Digital recorders were used during the interviews and continuous notes were written during observations which raise the validity of the study (Kihlström, 2007). In the analysis of the interviews we listened to the data several times to collect the information necessary. Laughter, pauses and unclear answers were taken away since they were not relevant. To achieve a good quality it is necessary that the researchers make sensible choices processing the information, thus, critically evaluate the study by being open minded to other’s interpretations and keep the aim in focus at all times (Dovemark, 2007). According to Larsson (2005) quality should also present integrity, awareness of its perspective; it should be logical and have ethical values. The result should have richness in meaning, structure and theoretical backup and also be easily understood by the readers (Larsson, 2005).

We also listened and read each others’ materials and contrasted our interpretations of the collected information since it is necessary for the reliability (Thurén, 2007). Our choice of using interview and observation to gain the empirical information and the fact that we are three different individuals giving opinions also increases the reliability of this study (Thurén, 2007).
4. RESULTS

We wanted to find out the pupils’ thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition. The questions we focused on were: How important is it to speak English during lessons for second language acquisition? In which way do the pupils believe they learn to speak English best? During which activities do the pupils use English in the classroom? The questions that outline our study are not directly the ones used during the interview³ but the ones that helped us to answer them. The pupils knew that they were going to be observed but not when it would take place. They were asked if they wanted to participate in the group interviews before we started recording them, even though we had the parents’ approval.

4.1. Observations

We observed three different classrooms on two different occasions. Each observation was made during a 40 minutes lesson. There were 15 pupils observed in sixth grade, 30 pupils in seventh grade and 26 pupils in ninth grade. The observations were done by writing continuous notes. There are different ways of observing, structured- and non-structured⁴ (Kihlström, 2007). For this study we took notes and therefore our observation can be classified as a structured one.

4.1.1. Observation in Sixth Grade

This was a very quiet group and the teacher did not have to give instructions more than once. There were no written instructions on the white board. The teacher started the lesson by speaking English to the pupils. They were asked to open their text books at a certain page. When they had the text books in front of them, she explained what they were supposed do in Swedish; which was to read the text in pairs out loud. Consequently they answered her in Swedish.

While the pupils were reading, the teacher walked around giving them an exercise about irregular verb forms. The task was to fill in the gaps using the correct tense for the verb that

³ See Appendix
⁴ See Observation in Method
was in brackets in front of each sentence. The verbs and the instructions on the paper were in Swedish. Most of the pupils did not have any problems to read and start filling the gaps. Two pupils spent the whole lesson doing nothing, maybe of their own choice or because they did not understand the instructions given to them. The pupils did not speak English to each other at any time while working with the exercises. The only time they spoke English was to give the right answer for the verbs that they had just finished.

The second observation took place after the interviews. The lesson was the same as the first one observed. The pupils read a text from the text book together in pairs followed by exercises to fill in the gaps. The pupils did not speak English during anytime of the lesson, not even answering the exercises out loud.

4.1.2. Observation in Seventh Grade

There were many different levels of comprehension in this group, which means that the work handed out from the teacher had to be adjusted so that it fitted all individuals in the classroom. The lesson started with the teacher noting the presence of the pupils in English. The pupils responded to their names as they usually would pronounce them in Swedish. The lesson plan was written on the white board. In this lesson they were going to start with a new text and the teacher asked the pupils to get their textbooks open on a certain page, still speaking in English. First the teacher read the text in English and afterwards the pupils got different paragraphs to read out loud to the class.

The teacher spoke English in the beginning of the lesson; this was when she was talking about which text and what page they were going to start on. But when it got more advanced, for example the different exercises that are connected to the text from the work book, she needed to explain certain things in Swedish so that everybody could understand since the pupils were asking her for help in Swedish. When the teacher stood in front of the whole class and someone wanted to ask a question and did this in Swedish, the teacher always reminded them to speak in English. The pupils used little verbal English themselves during the lesson. But when the teacher spoke in Swedish the pupils always answered back in Swedish.

The second observation was made in the lesson called the “pupil’s choice” which was different from an ordinary lesson. Instead of working with text and vocabulary the pupils
were supposed to practise speaking English. The teacher placed all the pupils in a circle sitting on chairs including herself. From a little bag she had in her hand the pupils got to draw pieces of paper with a word written in English. Whatever the pupils first thoughts were when they saw this word they were going to talk about it. The teacher started to set an example. In the beginning the pupils found it quite hard just to talk spontaneously about something but after a while they got braver and talked about all kinds of things related to the words. Through the whole lesson the teacher spoke English except when she had to translate a word for the pupils; otherwise the lesson was in English.

4.1.3. Observation in Ninth Grade

In the beginning the focus of the observation was on how the teacher started the lesson and if the pupils continued to approach her verbally in English. The case was that the teacher did speak in English, welcoming them and introducing today’s tasks and the pupils responses were to be quiet. By doing so they indicated that they had understood. However, a minute or two after, some of the pupils shouted to the teacher and asked her to repeat what she just said, in Swedish. This behaviour was observed in both observations, but the teacher told them that if they had listened they would have understood and then she repeated the task once again, in front of the whole class in English. Despite this the pupils kept speaking Swedish amongst each other.

When the pupils approached the teacher she reminded them that they should approach her in English if they wanted her to help them, and the pupils obeyed. On other occasions when pupils raised their hands the teacher also had to remind them to speak in English and if not another classmate would. However, they continued speaking in Swedish as soon as she turned her back on them. The teacher did not remind them to use English when speaking with their bench-mate or with each other, the reminders came, but only when the pupils approached her. Some pupils were persistent in using Swedish all the time and at the end of the lesson they got it their way; they spoke Swedish and the teacher answered in English. The others spoke English to the teacher and continued with Swedish with classmates.
4.2. Interviews

Eight groups of pupils were interviewed, three groups from sixth grade, two groups from seventh grade and three groups in ninth grade. The interviews took place in three different schools but located in the same municipality of Borås. The method used was group interview, which means that four or five pupils were interviewed at the same time. In group interview the focus lays on the content and composition of the group (Gillham, 2005). It is a way of collecting empirical data that run deep; such as opinions and conflicts that might not surface in individual interviews, since interaction between the participants does not exist (Gillham, 2005). All quotations in the interviews below are our own translations since the interviews were done in Swedish.

4.2.1. Interview in Sixth Grade

All pupils answered that the only time they speak English in the classroom is when they read texts out loud, or when giving answers to exercises. The teacher only uses English to say the pages numbers in the textbook or correcting exercises; otherwise Swedish is the language used during lessons. They all agreed that there is not enough English communication input in school today. If they take away the reading and answering exercises, there is not any oral English communication in the classroom.

Two groups would like to have more communication input during lessons, because they would learn how to pronounce and speak correctly. Four pupils said that it would help them to understand and know how to form sentences on their own. The pupils wanted to be encouraged to speak more English: “It would not hurt if when she goes around, and we talk Swedish to her, that she said: How do we say that in English? I would try to say what I can anyway” (Melinda, group 3). Outside the classroom they used some expressions, such as “bullshit, love you, see you later alligator, goodbye, give to me”, during breaks and lessons.

They all agreed that it is important to speak English for learning the language. However, they did not feel motivated or encouraged to do it at school; and therefore, they feel insecure when they need to speak English today. The reasons why the pupils feel uncomfortable were many. More than half of them feel that the teacher is always looking for correct answers when they speak. A couple of pupils feel uncomfortable because the teacher does not speak English
enough and therefore they feel unmotivated to start a conversation by themselves. The remainder pupils think that they do not know how a word is pronounced and they are afraid to say something wrong and that someone will start to laugh at them.

Half of the pupils in this study would like to have oral lessons with the purpose of learning English. An example they gave about of how an oral lesson should be is: To listen to music or watch films and have a discussion afterwards. None of the pupils felt it would be a hinder for learning if the teacher only spoke English during lessons. It would be difficult in the beginning since they are not used to it. A suggestion they made was that the teacher should use the words they have been learning and mix both languages in the classroom. However, grammar explanations they want to keep in Swedish, for the sake of understanding at once and also because they want know the correct grammatical terms for what they are learning.

All pupils agreed that it is easier to talk when they are abroad. The reason given was because they do not need to think about grammar and how to pronounce a word correctly. The important thing is to make oneself understood: “When I am abroad the people I meet never judge how I speak. Often it is the opposite, they encourage me to speak to them and it feels natural then to speak English” (Melinda, group 3). “When I went to England, it was not a problem for me to speak with an Englishman about football. And I was lauded by him too. I felt very proud then. He did not care that I said things wrong, he understood me anyway” (Marcello, group 1). “I do not care if I say anything wrong when I am on a holiday abroad, because I will probably not see this person when I return to Sweden, then it is easier because I do not think about grammar and how I should say a word, I just do” (Maria, group 2). “English people do not judge and correct you every time you say something wrong as the teacher does” (Marvin, group 2). “If you go to a country where they have English as a foreign language, as Thailand for example, they feel the same as we do, because English is not their mother tongue either” (Melvin, group 1). Two girls answered that they feel comfortable speaking English if they can use their dictionaries or textbooks to search for words they do not know; otherwise they avoid speaking English, both in the classroom and outside school. The pupils all agreed that the main reason for learning English had to do with activities outside school, such as going abroad, understanding what songs, films and websites are about, being able to communicate with people that have another nationality than themselves and for future achievements in life as applying for a job or further studies.
Most of the pupils think that they learn English best in school, by reading the textbook and translating vocabulary to Swedish afterwards. Three pupils think that the best way they learn English is by watching films and listening to music in English. They said that it is not necessary for the text to be in Swedish; however, none of them said that they did not need a text to follow when they are watching films or listening to music: “Having a text that I can look at when I am listening to a song I never heard before, helps me to understand better what the song is about and I learn new words and how to pronounce them too, because if I did not know what it means, I search for the word on a website or in a dictionary” (Melinda, group 3).

Two pupils agreed that the text following the film or song did not need to be in Swedish. “The reason why I want to see a text when watching a film or listening to a song is because it is easier to understand what they are saying; because sometimes they speak, sing too fast, but then I still understand the whole context of the film, song anyway” (Markus, group 3). One girl said that she learns best by reading books and talking to her mother. The family has lived in an English speaking country for a couple of years and the mother encourages her and her siblings to speak English on daily basis at home.

4.2.2. Interview in Seventh Grade

The main thing dominating these interviews was that most of the pupils agreed that the situations when you learn English best are when the situations are authentic. On several occasions the answers were that it just comes more naturally if spoken English has to do with real life situations. For instance, most of the pupils in the two groups mentioned that whenever you are on vacation abroad or have to speak English to a person who does not speak Swedish, it is a good opportunity to learn and speak English.

The pupils’ opinions differed somewhat on the aspect of how they learned English best. One of the boys in the first interview group thought that the best place to learn English was in school, because the environment there was, in his opinion, good for him and he also thought that the teacher was good to learn English from; he liked the exercises from the workbook because he learned English from doing them. He also pointed out that school was the only place he used English at all (Steven, group 1).

The rest of the pupils in group one thought that they learned English best when it had to do with something they liked, something fun. They had all different ideas about what were fun
English learning activities, but the four pupils agreed that it was very difficult to have a fun English lesson unless they got to watch a movie or play games. Watching TV was one of the boy’s suggestions on how to learn and speak English and his motivation was: “it is easier to look at real persons speaking English rather than to read texts from a book, even if the persons you are watching are yellow” (Chris, group 1). He said that when it feels more real it is easier to learn and the three other girls in the interview group agreed with him. The other boy in the group also thought chatting to English friends on the internet was a good way of learning English and this was also something he enjoyed and learned much English from, even though there was no speaking he still heard the sentences he was writing and reading in his head (Mike, group 1).

Two of the girls thought the best way of learning English is when you speak to an English speaking person, because “they do not care if you get it wrong”. They also felt that it is easier when it is “for real, the words come easier” (Sofia, group 2). The pupils thought that in the classroom it is more difficult to speak English because they felt embarrassed if they got it wrong in front of the whole class.

In the second group of respondents all the pupils agreed that the best way to learn and speak English was in real life situations, “you learn better from a real person than from books” (Magda, group 2). The pupils in the second group thought it was easier to speak English when it was not to their teacher. When they were working in small groups they said it felt like they learn English better because then it was more relaxed and they did not care so much if they made mistakes. They would like group work more often because they did not like speaking in front of the class in general.

4.2.3. Interview in Ninth Grade

There is a clear difference between the interviews where one group was more talkative than the other, despite that, all the questions were answered to more or less the same degree. The interviews show that the pupils are in touch with the English language constantly, at home watching the TV, in school during English lessons, on breaks joking with their peers, going abroad or just taking a stroll down town.
When answering the question about what they think of having subtitles in Swedish when watching the TV or an English/American film, many of the pupils said that it is, often, in the way, because if the subtitles are there then the focus is on them and you are robbed of the opportunity to think for yourself. “The subtitles are just in the way” (Daniella, group 1). Other opinions were that the pupils do not have trouble understanding the movie but consider it more comfortable to have the translation.

When the questions about classroom related English were brought up there seemed to be an agreement that they could speak more English in class and that you learn the language better if you are obligated to speak it and have the opportunity to listen to it. “Yes, you learn more and it is easier” (Dani, group 2). Most of the pupils do not take own initiatives to speak English during classes if they are not reminded, though, they think it is good if the teacher reminds them. The only time they could think of using English spontaneously is when they are joking around with peers and throw in some English phrases, or if someone approaches them for some kind of directions. When they were asked where they get the phrases from, they answered from movies, computer games and chat sites. If the pupils were urged to speak English on all occasions during the English lessons they argue that it would be fun and that they would try their best. “It would be fun” (Dexter, group 3). “I think it would work very well” (Drucilla, group 3).

One of the last questions was if they consider English being an important subject in school and why, and all the pupils in the three groups agreed on English being an important subject. The arguments were that it is the primary tool if you want to go abroad, to work, study or to go on vacation. “Yes, it is good to learn English” (Denver, group 3). “Yes, I guess it is important, it is a global language” (Denise, group 1). The pupils’ opinion on how they think they learn English best was from a combination of reading books, speaking spontaneously and working with writing, but in their case they thought they could work more on the speaking part. “Orally, I think/…/ you learn how to handle the words in another ways” (Dave, group 1). ”Because, in the end it is more important to know how to communicate, orally, in different situations” (Daniella, group 1). They also highlight that if you only write you will know how to spell the words, but perhaps not know how to pronounce them correctly. “It is easier to learn the language if you just sit and write, but how will you know the pronunciation of the words?” (Danilo, group 2).
The situations where the pupils are obligated to speak English are when they are giving a presentation, reading out loud and answering questions. They also point out that lately, in ninth grade they have started having more discussions about different subjects. "Frankly, we speak too little, but the speaking has increased in the ninth grade” (Dennis, group 3). “Yes, now we have those discussion cards” (Dexter, group 3). "But the subjects are so strange, it should be about subjects we are interested in” (Daphne, group 3). "We could write down suggestions on subjects and then the teacher could choose from them” (Danika, group 2).

4.3. Summary of Result

In our research, we have found out that in general English teachers use both English and Swedish language while teaching. During the observations in year seven and nine, we found out that it is most common that the teacher introduce the lesson in the target language, but when something new was introduced it usually happened in Swedish. However in year six the teacher only spoke Swedish through out the lesson.

In year seven and nine the pupils found speaking English important in order to learn it, though during lessons they found it uncomfortable to do so, since many of them were insecure of using the language in the classroom. They wished to speak more but in smaller groups, this would make them feel more comfortable speaking in front of each other. In year six the pupils did not feel this pressure, they simply wanted to be motivated to use English as a common language in the classroom for oral communication.

All groups pointed out the importance of knowing how to communicate in English for their future lives; they were referring to future studies, travelling and international jobs. They also claimed that the main source of learning English is informal learning. Other occasions where English is used orally are when they read a text out loud in the classroom, doing exercises such as dialogues and tasks in the workbooks that require them to speak amongst each other. Many pupils found it comfortable and easy when the teacher used Swedish to explain something new but they also said that it would be more challenging and developing for them if the teacher tried different strategies in explaining the task in English. The absence of English use amongst the teachers made the pupils unmotivated in using it themselves. All the pupils agreed that there is not enough oral communication in the classroom, especially with
the purpose of learning English by using it. They also said it is difficult to create authentic situations for speaking English in the classroom. The spoken language comes easier while using it in real life situations.

The pupils had in the interviews expressed their best way of learning English being outside school. Through listening to music, watching TV, chatting with other people on the internet, reading books and interacting with English speaking people abroad. During lessons, the situations where they used English orally were the tasks that instruct them to turn to the classmate they were sitting with or when they were reading out loud in the classroom. The pupils expressed the urge to speak English and that they would like to speak more because they believed that that is the way they learn best. In this situation it is the teachers’ responsibility to constantly remind the pupils’ of the importance of using English orally for language acquisition. The pupils’ responses on this were that the teacher needs to use Swedish so that everybody can follow through out the lesson.

5. DISCUSSION

In the following chapter we will discuss the result in connection to the theoretic background and our own thoughts about the result from the observations and interviews. From the different theories about language acquisition we will draw conclusion from the pupils own thoughts on the subject. Our observations of the classroom environment gave us interesting views on how oral communication is used during lesson time. On the basis of the pupils’ point of view, the purpose of this study is to find out their thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition.

5.1. Discussion of Result

Many pupils feel insecure speaking English in the classroom. Making statements or addressing the whole class can be very emotionally demanding for the pupils in many cases. Even utterances to a single classmate can be a difficulty for some pupils. To speak English and to have courage to address a large group of people has to do with the persons own self-esteem. According to Brown (1994) factors such as emotions are important aspects for
language acquisition. If a person is shy in general and insecure in expressing themselves it does not make it easier to do this in a second language such as English.

There always seems to be a good intention from the teacher’s side in trying to speak as much English as possible during the lessons. What seemed to have happened is that whenever the teacher comprehended something being too hard for the pupils to understand in English they turned to Swedish, and whenever the teacher had started to use Swedish the pupils seemed to think that it was alright to continue to speak in Swedish as well. The reasons why the teacher does not speak English could be many but leaving out oral communication in English might give the pupils the impression that the teacher is not certain about what to say and how to say it, and naturally, this affects the pupils’ self-esteem and increases the uncomfortable feeling in using English spontaneously in the classroom during English lessons. Communication from the teacher to the pupils is vital in education; a teacher, who feels confident in using the English language orally, transmits it to the pupils as well as an insecure teacher transmits the insecurity (Kitson, 1997).

We wonder if the pupils in the various grades, during different situations, who were not involved in the classroom activities did not understand the instructions given to them or if it was a conscious choice to do nothing? If they did not understand, then the teacher fails in transmitting the instructions and noting the different needs of the individuals in her class, and the pupils who did not understand fail in their responsibility to question the instructions and ask for a clarification. If it is the second case then perhaps the lessons in English are not stimulating or motivating enough for the pupils to want to engage. Motivation is a key factor in order to aggregate learning (Van Lier, 1996) and it is the teacher’s task to support the learners’ motivation (Chambers, 1999). Addressing the pupils’ different learning strategies can be a good way to connect to their actions during the English lessons (Hedge, 2004). We also wonder about the pupils’ ability in using the learning situations in the best way possible, of course this is a hard thing to detect if you are not aware of the fact that there are several ways to work on one learning situation.

The communication between the pupils and the teacher is in many ways in wanting for more clarification from both parts. We have during our observations noticed that somehow there seem to be different languages spoken in the classroom and then we are not just referring to Swedish and English. By different languages we suggest that there are various ways to
communicate with one and other. According to Johnson (1999) effective teaching depends on successful communication. According to Bernstein (2003) the same language can differ in society depending on who is using it. It can be people from the working class or some other group in society that have a certain way of using the language with intonations and codes different from other groups. In the classroom there are also pupils from different groups in society were English is used more or less depending on the asset of the language, whether it is through computers, TV or family members, could vary. The individuals in the classroom are affected by their own different inhibited intonations and codes as well as verbal expressions, cognitive and affective modes which also can isolate the individual from the group (Bernstein, 2003). The language used by the pupils might not be fully understood by the teacher, and the other way around, and therefore there occurs a gap in the communication.

The current communication practised in the classroom seems to be much filled with clichés and empty phrases, usually connected to common situations were the pupils and the teachers already know the upcoming answer. For example, “Mike, could you please shut the door, since you’re the last one coming in to the classroom”, or, “everybody please turn to page 39 in your textbooks”, There is not much said to encourage or ravel neither stimulate nor motivate the pupils for learning the target language. The questions we ask ourselves are: What are the pupils trying to communicate? What is the teacher trying to communicate? And do these two voices ever meet inside the classroom? There are different wishes from both parties when it comes to the best way of learning a second language. The teachers have their goals to pursue in attention to develop the pupils’ ability in using the second language but the pupils’ goals are not very different since they also wish to be able to express themselves in the target language. Evidently the pupils’ attempt in achieving this is different from the present classroom tutoring. The proximal developing zone proclaims that the optimal mode for learning is if the on going learning is one step above the current level of knowledge (Krashen, 1987; Vygotskij, 1986). Our observation show us that the pupils motivation is not being fulfilled, which consequently unable the pupils to develop further in their language skills. We wonder if perhaps more challenging- , and as our research shows, more authentic exercises would be an uplifting factor for the pupils?

As well as certain phrases are used, there seems to be unwritten rules applied in the classroom when it comes to the allowance of communicating in Swedish during an English lesson. For example when the pupils are about to ask the teacher a question it has to be in English
otherwise they will be reminded, if not from the teacher but from their classmates. When the pupils in various situations need clarifications of instructions they often turn to Swedish for an explanation, without being reminded by the teacher to speak in English. In many of these situations the teacher usually repeats the same instructions as before, but seem to avoid a third explanation in English, this because it might have to include a rephrase of the instruction with a different choice of vocabulary.

The result shows that there is an attempt to use verbal communication in English during English lessons. However it also seems that the goal is not achieved since the lessons always, in our cases; end with oral communication in Swedish. To start with, the pupils made some effort to keep English in use. Further, we felt that the responsibility is on the teachers’, who according to our observations are not persistent enough in reminding pupils to stick to English when speaking.

We can draw a common conclusion when it comes to perceptions about English as a second language and the methods used in the classroom to learn English. According to Hedge (2004) it is in the learners’ best interest to be in situations where they need to make themselves understood. This is something that the pupils have to get adjusted to in the beginning of their second language acquisition, in order to create a habit of speaking English on a regular basis. This would make it easier for the pupils to rely on this language in the future; this is also something Behaviourism proclaims in its theories about learning. To create situations like this would probably be preferable if the language was not divided into the different competences for learning (Hedge, 2004).

Many comments were made about the easiness the pupils felt when they were using English abroad. The pupils feel that the listeners in those cases are not judging their English skills but they were even receiving complements on their English abilities and this motivated them to continue speaking. Motivation is an important aspect to be considered when learning a second language. It can determine success or failure in any learning situation. It is one of the most important factors in second language acquisition (Van Lier, 1996, p. 98). “English people do not judge and correct you every time you say something wrong as the teacher does” (Marvin, group 2). The pupils also expressed that it might be easier to speak English abroad if the people in the foreign country also have English as a foreign language.
Speaking is the main tool for communication, when interacting internationally. There are many aspects that influence language acquisition. One is Informal Learning (Viberg, 1992) which means knowledge is gained on a daily basis through authentic situations. Many of the pupils’ connections to English are during their spare time through digital games played on the computer with belonging instructions, and learning rules which are all written in English and probably involve using a dictionary to look words up. Those pupils who are willingly in contact with English and put an effort to understand the things that come up during their spare time also find English interesting in school. They complain about not watching movies during lessons because according to the pupils the teachers claim that they do not learn much from them, but the pupils argue that it depends on what you do after having seen the film. Pupils also find it language developing not to have subtitles in Swedish. This statement from the pupils we believe shows that they have a good idea in which ways the can learn English.

The data collected through interviews points to the fact that there is little, or no link to authentic situations and informal learning in school. The pupils’ comments were that it is much easier to find words and speak when the situation is authentic. During our observations we can see a lack of occasions where the pupils get to show their knowledge gained from informal situations outside school. This is a shame since the pupils probably have much to show and contribute to the forth going communication in the classroom. The pupils are confounded about the lack of those kinds of activities, since they find it developing and motivating.

All the pupils state that English is an important subject in school and seem to have a good idea about why it is usable in the future. They speak about future international studies and international jobs. Since English is used almost everywhere today it is something we as teachers should take in consideration. Perhaps English should be taught more as the Swedish subject in order to get its completeness. There has to be more communication amongst the pupils if we wish them to achieve the fluency in speaking the target language as the syllabuses enquire. Viberg (1992) points to the importance of being in an environment where the target language is heard and used, and if this nowadays is everywhere, why not in the English classroom as well. If the pupils were allowed to communicate their knowledge in a way that suited the classroom environment, there would probably be much more English communication going on. One way of finding out which activities the pupils would prefer as their language developing exercises would be to ask them, as we have done in this study, for
example use more authentic situations; like watching movies. Another method would be to observe the pupils during their lessons and find out in which situations they feel comfortable exercising the target language orally, and to complete the observations; letting the pupils give their suggestions on how the same lesson could be even more developing for their knowledge in English oral communication. Showing the pupils that you as a teacher trust them in their own judgement on how they learn best, we believe would give a positive response from the pupils in order that they get to know that the knowledge is already within themselves. Further, perhaps this also might make the pupils more responsible in their own learning process. In Learner Autonomy this is a proclaimed way of tutoring and where the teacher takes a step back in the pupils learning process (Hedge, 2004; Tholin, 2001).

Our experiences of the Swedish Curriculum and Syllabus show us that there is a wide run of interpreting abilities available for the teachers when planning learning situations, especially when referring to language development. The documents do not explain specifically what and how the pupils should learn certain components of the language, if so, just in few exceptions. Therefore the teacher is left with a great possibility to pick and choose on how to make her education in the classroom. Based on our own experiences from teaching practice abroad, the curriculum and syllabuses in the English school systems are very specific in their achievements and goals for the pupils to attain. We should consider ourselves lucky since we can choose which way we want to tutor as long as we pursue the goals to strive for in the Curriculum (Skolverket, 2006) and Syllabus (Skolverket, 2001). Naturally we should involve the pupils in planning and carrying out lessons (Hedge, 2004; Tholin, 2001), however our experiences prove us the opposite.

The fact that the learning situation is very complex is impossible to overlook, in our discussion we have mentioned some of the reasons we think possible for the fact that there are more teaching going on in the English lesson than learning. Perhaps the schools view upon knowledge is outdated, at least when it comes to the English subject which is to this point integrated as such in our society. According to Lagerberg (2007) school is a product of society and not the other way around. And there for the curriculum and syllabuses needs to be rethought as Applebee (1996) claims. Though we suggest that it might not be the syllabuses it selves that need so be converted but our way to interpret them. When evaluating what has been going on in the past, we tend to disregard the problems and only look at the positive
outcome of the learning situations in school. If more effort would be put into analysing the obstacles instead we might come closer to a solution.

5.2. Discussion of Methods

We have chosen to draw from a qualitative method through interviews and observations with the pupils in three different schools. Throughout the preparation of this study, we made a conscious decision choosing observation and interview as the methods of collecting our empirical data. These methods were suitable for our aim which was to find out the pupils personal thoughts and experiences about speaking English for second language acquisition. The data could not have been collected more properly through a quantitative questionnaire since the focus of our study was not to gain measurable results but to understand the pupils’ thoughts, ideas and approaches about English as second language.

Hermeneutic scientific approach was the method consulted throughout our study. We found the hermeneutic approach suitable because its purpose is to comprehend the thoughts and understandings of others, in our case, the pupils’ thoughts about: How important do the pupils believe is to speak English during lessons for second language acquisition? In which way do the pupils believe they learn to speak English best? During which activities do the pupils use English in the classroom?

We were aware of the fact that the knowledge gained through the hermeneutic approach is not static since the thoughts, and ideas of the pupils can change over time (Lantz, 1993). In contrast to the phenomenographic approach which strives to compare and measure a phenomenon our purpose was not to have direct answers; however to have a discussion about our aim. It was neither to compare nor measure the schools and the pupils’ thoughts and therefore the phenomenographic approach was not suitable to our study.

The number of interviews was affected by the time aspect due to the allowance we received from the schools. We chose to do the interviews in Swedish because it is easier for the pupils to express themselves in Swedish. The interview questions we used were not directly about our aim but included open questions and were linked to their every day life, in the hope to
gain answers to our purpose. With these questions we also wished for the pupils to feel secure and answer the questions easily and lead to an open and self going dialogue.

We also chose to do observations to find out when the pupils use English in the classroom. Therefore we chose to do two observations in each target group, one before and one after the interviews. The reason was to see if the pupils’ became self aware of their use of oral English in the classroom after the interviews. Thus, the purpose of our study was not to make them change their behaviour but to see if they agreed on what they said during the interviews. During the observations the focus was based on the interview questions which meant that we observed how the spoken English was used in the classroom; if the teacher uses English when she speaks, if she encourages the pupils to answer and talk in English; if the pupils use English when they answer or approach the teacher and if they use English amongst each other, whenever they want to utter something.

6. CONCLUSION

Through our study we have come to the conclusion that there are positive and negative factors in learning English as a second language. The positive factors are that pupils are aware of the importance of learning English through communication for future purposes. The pupils feel there is not enough oral training in school. Most of the oral communication they have is by reading out loud or answering simple questions. However informal learning is the current way the pupils acquire their English knowledge, but unfortunately this part is left out in learning situations in the classroom.

The insecurity the pupils seem to feel when communicating in English is hard to get over if, as they point out, they do not start working on it in the early ages. The teachers most often turn to Swedish in situations when pupils question their instruction, which is interpreted as a sense of insecurity. The sense of insecurity is then a transferable self-perception. The syllabus for English and in the Curriculum for Swedish compulsory school (Skolverket, 2001; Skolverket, 2006) highlight the importance of communicative skills and with that the classroom education should have communication abilities in focus, which today is not the fact, according to our observations and interviews.
6.1. Didactical Consequences

We live in a multicultural society where the English Language might occupy a third or even a fourth language status for some of our pupils. Learning a second language means also learning about its country, ways of living and traditions (Skolverket, 2001). How the pupils interpret, understand and make the knowledge of a second language to its own, depends on how they experience and further use the language in a meaningful context linked to their needs outside the classroom. It is through social contexts (Vygotsky, 1986; Piaget, 1972), interactions (Krashen, 1987) and oral communication (Johnson, 1999) that the pupils have opportunities to develop their language skills and therefore, interaction and the contact between the teacher and the pupils are essential for language development:

Knowledge is not static and can not be transferred from teacher to pupil, but has to be build and developed through interaction between the individuals involved in the dialogue. Teaching with the emphasis on social interaction will help the pupils to both adopt other people’s structures and knowledge and transform to its own knowledge.

(Dysthe, 1996, p. 46, our own translation)

During our years as teacher-students at the University of Borås, it has been taught to us the importance of “what, how and why” pupils should develop their knowledge and take responsibility for their own learning in school; and that knowing how to teach is equal or even more important than knowing how pupils develop their knowledge, since we can not teach what we do not know: “ /…/ teaching competence is the ability to manage activities and interaction successfully in the sense that learners know what they need to do and why they are doing it, are motivated to work actively, are monitored and guided when help is need.” (Hedge, 2004, p. 31).

Why is it important that teachers have full control of what, how and why to teach? Should the pupils’ not be involved in planning, carrying out and evaluating a lesson? According to Tholin (Språkboken, 2001), a learner-based teaching is a positive way of including pupils in lesson-planning. It is based on activities that all pupils bring into the classroom. It gives opportunities for authentic situations to be used for language learning. Furthermore, the pupils share responsibility with the teacher for their individual learning. “/…/ people who take the initiative in learning, learn more things and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of
teachersonly waiting to be taught” (Hedge, 2004, p.83). A controversial matter to learner-based teaching can be personal likes and dislikes in what the pupils brings into the classroom. Otherwise, the method achieves important goals to strive for described in the Syllabuses, such as: develop the ability of planning, carrying out and evaluating tasks on their own and in co-operation with others and relate to something about themselves and others (Skolverket, 2001).

If we want the classroom to be a place where every individual can contribute and learn from each other, it is vital to use oral communications skills in order to create and exploit different activities that can provide different opportunities for language acquisition (Hedge, 2004; Dysthe, 1996). However, we do not mean that books should vanish from school and we are not claiming that the only way pupils should gain knowledge is by oral output and intake. Books offer a grammatical and functional framework that provides guidelines for the common needs pupils have. They also allow the pupils to prepare in advance for lessons. But today, text books are misused by being the only source of developing the pupils’ knowledge. By misusing text books, pupils do not develop their sense of curiosity and the desire to learn, or their own individual way of learning and do not use technology available to them as a tool for knowledge development, which are one of the most important goals to strive for according to the Curriculum and Syllabuses in the compulsory school (Skolverket, 2001; Skolverket, 2006).

Learning a second language is not something we achieve during a week, month or even a year. The ability of using a language correctly increases through the years. The most important thing is that the pupils, during their journey towards developing their second language, understand that there is a link between reading, speaking, writing and listening in the target language in order to become as fluent as native speakers (Cook, 2002). We have to make sure that our pupils develop their own strategies of learning a language and that we do not discourage them in the process of doing it. “Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I’ll remember; involve me and I’ll learn” (Chinese saying in Hedge, 2004, p.100). We need to see the school environment as a place where parents, pupils, teachers and the society can meet and co-operate in the pupils’ best interest.
6.2. Proposal for future research

From our background research we found out that first language acquisition takes place before schooling, through communication. Despite the importance of oral input for language learning, second language acquisition has still today focus on grammar and vocabulary intake. Our first proposal for future research is to find out why grammar and vocabulary input is the focus for second language acquisition instead of communication strategies. It would also be interesting to do the same study having teachers’ point of view in focus instead of the pupils’. It would be meaningful to compare and analyse if the answers gained from the teachers about the importance of speaking English for second language acquisition will have resemblances with the answers we gained from the pupils for this study.

The pupils think that the reason they need to learn English is mostly for outside school related activities, such as watching television, travelling and Internet. Therefore, the third suggestion we make is to find out teachers experiences and thoughts about informal learning as a method for language acquisition in their classroom. A new aim would be to find out if the teachers use authentic situations in the English classroom.

In our discussion we mentioned the unwritten rules being a part of the classroom environment, which awakened an interest in us to investigate this hypothesis. In this case, it would be important to have teachers’ and pupils’ points of view in focus. Otherwise, the material gained would not give a fair result of what these rules are, since teachers and pupils probably have different thoughts and experiences about its significance in the classroom.
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APPENDIX

Interview Questionnaire

Hur viktigt tycker ni det är att kunna engelska?
*How important is it to know English?*

Hur anser ni att ni lär er bäst engelska?
*In which way do you learn English best?*

När känner ni er mest trygga för att kommunicera på engelska?
*When do you feel confident and comfortable speaking English?*

När pratar ni engelska i klassrummet/skolan?
*When do you speak English in the classroom?*

När pratar läraren engelska med er?
*When does the teacher speak English with you?*

Lär ni er bättre när läraren pratar engelska eller svenska på lektionerna?
*Do you learn English better when the teacher speaks Swedish or English with you?*

Tror ni att det kan spela någon roll om läraren skulle prata endast engelska med er? Varför?
*Would it be a difference in learning if the teacher only speaks English in the classroom? Why?*

Är det mycket eller lite engelskpratande i klassrummet/skolan? Varför?
*How much time spent in speech, oral exercises in the classroom today? Do you think is too much or too little oral exercises? Why?*

Tycker ni att det är viktigt att prata engelska för att lära sig engelska?
*How important is to know how to speak English in the process of learning English in its whole meaning?*

När pratar ni engelska förutom på skolan?
*When do you speak English besides than in school?*

Hur tror ni att ni kommer att ha användning av engelska i framtiden?
*Will you have any use of English knowledge in the future? Why and How?*

Kan ni ge exempel på tillfällen när ni tycker det är bra att prata engelska?
*Can you give examples when and where do you think it is important to know how to speak English?*