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Educational Approaches & Strategies for ESL Teaching in Swedish Compulsory Schools

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate what educational approaches and strategies that are used by five teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and how they differ between three different schools. This was done through reviewing literature about educational approaches and strategies in ESL and analyzing the responses from a questionnaire given to five teachers in grades seven to nine at three different schools. The results showed a wide usage of the following approaches and strategies: using computers, including drama and role-playing, watching films and TV programs in English, listening to radio, news, or songs in English, using code-switching, encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers, teaching about cultures where English is spoken, and promoting discussions and social interaction.

The results of this study showed that most of the differences exist between the individual teachers rather than between the schools, when it comes to the use of and attitudes towards these approaches and strategies. However, the two which differed the most, judging from the responses, were: using code-switching and encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers. In these two cases it was possible to see differences both between specific schools and teachers.

Key words: English as a second language, second language teaching and learning, teacher attitudes, bilingual education, educational strategies.

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1 Introduction

The world is constantly becoming more globalized due to global businesses, increased traveling, and wider exposure to different languages and cultures. The need to understand other languages has therefore increased worldwide and learning an additional language is, in many parts of the world, a part of the core curriculum in education (Garrett-Rucks, 2016, p. 1 & Hinkel, 2014, p. 6).

When talking about language learning, one may encounter different terms, such as first language (L1), second language (L2), and foreign language (FL). L1 is the language someone learns first, while L2 and FL signify any additional languages. The difference between learning an L2 and learning an FL is the setting in which the targeted language is learnt. An L2 is learnt in a setting where the targeted language is spoken in the surrounding community, while an FL is learnt in a setting where the targeted language is generally not spoken in the surrounding community. However, “[i]n either case, they are simply trying to learn another language, so the expression **second language learning** is used more generally to describe both situations” (Yule, 2014, p. 187). Therefore, and because of the wide usage of and exposure to English in the Swedish community, English will in this study be considered an L2 and not an FL.

Different educational approaches and strategies for L2 teaching and learning have, over the course of many years, emerged and there are many ways to achieve the goals set by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Different schools may have their own policies of how to conduct their teaching, some which have become more palpable along with the establishment of schools with special alignments, e.g. The International English School and *dual language education*. This specific alignment refers to programs which provide “literacy and content area instruction to all students through two languages” (Hinkel, 2014, p. 3). In addition to the various established approaches schools have, there are thousands of teachers who have their own unique ways for how to achieve the goals of the curriculum and how to prepare their pupils for a life in a globalized world. One educational strategy is “code switching”, which signifies the usage of both one’s L1 and L2 interchangeably in the teaching process. The National Agency for Education states in the curriculum for the upper secondary school that “[t]eaching should as far as possible be conducted in English” (National Agency for Education, 2011b, p. 1), while no such guidelines exist for the compulsory school. In order to investigate whether differences in policy between the upper secondary school and the compulsory school affect the choices of certain teaching approaches and strategies, this study focuses on L2 teaching and learning in the compulsory school.

What this study examines is what educational approaches and strategies five teachers of English as a second language (ESL) use in three Swedish compulsory schools and how the use differs between the teachers and schools. A strategy, when speaking of language education, is a conscious action that someone uses to help their students learn and use a language (Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2015, p. 125; cited in Oxford, 2017, p. 17). The essay will first present a background to introduce the reader to the areas of L2 teaching and learning, content from steering documents by the Swedish National Agency for Education, and a previous report carried out by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The background also contains an analysis of literature about L2 teaching and learning with focus on different educational approaches and strategies. After that, the aim of the study will be presented as well as the method and material that have been used. The section *analysis & results* analyzes responses from questionnaires about English teaching, answered by five teachers at three different compulsory schools in grades seven to nine. Lastly, the essay ends with a conclusion. The questionnaire is provided as an appendix.

2 Background

The concept of language is complex and there are different ways to think about the meaning of the word *language*. It can be a set of rules, physically present phenomena in the forms of speech, audio recordings, and writings, or a set of social conventions shared by a group of people (Gee & Hayes, 2011, p. 6).

2.1 Second language teaching & learning

When speaking of second language (L2) teaching and learning, a distinction between these terms is needed. Brown (2014) defines the term *learning* by stating that it means “acquiring knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience, or instruction” (p. 8). He defines *teaching* as “showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand” (ibid., p. 8).

Learning an L2 may be difficult and there are various aspects which need to be considered when striving to become a fluent L2 speaker. Brown (2014) lists some of these facets, emphasizing that fluency does not happen overnight and that learning an L2 also involves learning a second culture (p. 1). He also states that the learning process may include a whole new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. In addition to these features, commitment, motivation, serious effort, and social interaction in meaningful contexts are also involved in the learning process (ibid., p. 1).

Culture is a broad concept to define, but some aspects of what it encompasses will be addressed here. The social anthropological definition of culture is explained, according to Garrett-Rucks (2016), as patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting along with other menial things in life which include greeting, eating, and keeping physical distance from others (p. 19). She also addresses the *culture standards*, provided by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, as being sociocultural components used to enhance communicative competence and to communicate effectively (ibid., p. 40).

In a study by Maarof (2015) which examines ESL learners’ experiences and difficulties in Malaysia, some factors that tend to be responsible for academic failure in higher level education are listed. Examples mentioned are: students’ experiences of rigidity in learning styles, dependence on routines and teachers, lack of motivation and unorganized study skills, lack of academic and

intellectual competence, and an “excessive and overwhelming” workload (ibid., p. 83). Results of Maarof’s study claimed that teaching strategies, new methods, and new materials are crucial in order to improve the quality of education.

Some of the emerging issues were the lack of active learning, critical and creative thinking skills, also most of the learners voiced their concern on the lack of using the English language during classroom, whereby they were not able to practice communicating in English. Students are not motivated to learn when teachers resort to traditional methods of teaching (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). So, the educators need to vary their teaching methods in order to cater to the needs of the students. Also some of the respondents have suggested on using different teaching approaches apart from using the PowerPoint, and incorporating new teaching materials and aids in classroom. (Maarof, 2015, p. 86)

As this study suggests, there is a necessity for educators to be creative and to develop their teaching structures and ideas in order to enhance learning outcomes.

2.2 Steering documents

There are different steering documents which regulate how teachers should work, such as the *education act*, the curriculum, and other regulations. In these documents teachers can find multiple sources and guidelines to base their working methods on. Although regulations and policies may in some cases complicate the work of the teachers, the main purpose is to guide them in the right direction in order to secure quality and equality of the education.

The curriculum covers many of the fundamental values of the Swedish school system and it promotes the democratic values that should be taught. Education should foster pupils in accordance with ethics borne by Christian traditions and Western humanism, however, it must be non-denominational (National Agency for Education, 2011a, p. 5). It is also stated in the curriculum that “[c]oncern for the well-being and development of the individual should permeate all school activity” (ibid., p. 5). The curriculum also contains goals and knowledge requirements which teachers should strive to achieve with their pupils. One of the overall goals under the *aim* section states that the education should give pupils the opportunity to develop a comprehensive communicative ability. This includes both understanding of spoken and written English as well as the ability to formulate oneself and communicate in spoken and written English. The aim also includes that pupils should develop the ability to use strategies to make oneself understood, develop the ability to adapt the language for different settings, and develop the ability to reflect over living standards, society, and culture in parts of the world where English is used (ibid., pp. 34–35).

Under the *core content* section there are more specific skills listed that pupils are expected to work with. The skills are divided into three main parts: *content of communication*, *reception*, and *production and interaction*. Under content of communication for grades seven to nine, it is stated that pupils should talk about interests, everyday situations, relations, ethical questions, opinions, feelings, traditions and cultural phenomena in different settings where English is used (National Agency for Education, 2011a, p. 36). Some of the receptive skills pupils are expected to work with are the ability to understand spoken and written instructions, songs and poems, and different pronunciations and intonations. The pupils are also expected to encounter spoken English with different regional dialects and different ways to search for and choose relevant texts and speeches from the Internet and other media (ibid., p. 37). The section *production and interaction* covers working with oral and written stories and instructions, conversations and discussions, and strategies to make oneself understood and to participate in conversations (ibid., p. 37).

2.3 Previous report on ESL teaching

In a report conducted by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate it is stated that Swedish pupils acquire good results in English, according to international measurements (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 6). However, the report questions whether the results reflect a good and equivalent education for all pupils and it concludes that there are huge differences when it comes to the quality of education. It is stated in the curriculum for English that the education should focus on communicative ability. However, the Schools Inspectorate estimates that there should be more activities which develop pupils' communicative skills in nearly 50% of the lectures observed in their report (ibid., p. 6). One major objective of the report was to investigate if all pupils received equivalent opportunities to achieve the goals regardless of which group they were taught in. It is promoted in the *education act* that the education provided in every school form should be equivalent throughout the country (Department of Education, 2010, 1§9). The Schools Inspectorate's report shows, however, that there were vast differences within the same schools and that many schools lack systematic quality work and collaboration between the English teachers (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 7).

As earlier mentioned, it is stated in the curriculum that all school activity should be permeated by concern for the well-being of the individual. The Swedish National Agency for Education (2011a) also states that “[t]eaching should be adapted to each pupil's circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils' further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on the pupils' backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge” (p. 6). A large majority of the lectures

observed in the report promoted a safe and supportive learning environment. Despite this, the lectures many times lacked to really challenge every pupil. The report concludes that teaching is, overall, poorly adapted to pupils' individual needs. It also concludes that only 23 out of 293 schools were evaluated as "mostly strong" (which was the best on the four-grade scale used in the report) in the case of adapting instructions to pupils' individual needs (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 7). However, where examples of good adaptation occurred, the frames of the exercises were usually the same, while alignment, range, and solutions were different (ibid, p. 7).

According to the national steering documents, the concept of democracy should permeate the education and students should be able to have an impact on the teaching (Department of Education, 2010, 1§4 & 4§9). However, even though teachers in general are good at letting forward these features, they were to a great extent, judging by the observations in the report, not found in the English teaching (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 7).

When constructing teaching situations, one approach could be to look at and try to adapt to pupils' use of English outside of school. The report suggests that pupils believe that approximately half of their knowledge of English comes from school, while the other half comes from other settings, such as media. The report claims that many pupils make a distinction between English in school and English outside of school and that they feel much safer using it in a non-school setting rather than in school (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 8).

Furthermore, the report proposes arrangements when it comes to the use of computers in the teaching process. Some pupils claimed to use computers more often, while some claimed to never use them, and the results varied greatly between the schools. For the latter cases, the Schools Inspectorate suggests that large contributions must be made in order to keep up with the steering documents' directions regarding contemporary teaching aids (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 8).

These types of reports are carried out sporadically by the Schools Inspectorate to investigate and monitor the work of schools, in order to ensure that guidelines and policies are lived up to.

2.4 Educational approaches & strategies

How can teachers adapt their strategies and teaching models to cover as many different aspects of efficient language learning as possible? Firstly, one needs to look at what motivates pupils to develop their second language (L2) learning. As already mentioned, commitment, motivation, serious effort, and social interaction in meaningful contexts are involved in the learning process

(Brown, 2014, p. 1). The following sub-sections analyze specific educational approaches and strategies as reported in previous studies and they are also used to support and compare the questionnaires' data.

In a previous study about willingness to communicate in English inside the L2 classroom (Bursali & Öz, 2017) 27 activities and their effects on motivation are listed. The top five motivational activities listed in the study are: understanding an English movie, reading letters from a pen pal written in native English, writing down the instructions for your favorite hobby, reading reviews for popular movies, and talking to a friend while waiting in line. The bottom five activities listed as generating the least motivation are: writing a newspaper article, being an actor in a play, reading an article in a paper, writing an advertisement to sell an old bike and writing down a list of things one must do tomorrow (ibid., p. 234). However, the results shown in this study may differ from class to class depending on what type of personalities that are present. Therefore, it is important that teachers attempt to understand what specific activities, strategies, and methods their pupils are motivated by.

2.4.1 Computers

As a result of our globalized society and the development of technology, interest in computers has increased in the area of language teaching and learning (Borges, 2014, p. 20). Advocators of computer-assisted language learning emphasise the positive effects of using software programs on computers, or similar technology, in education.

Software programs can: (a) provide realistic, native-speaker models of the language in a variety of media, (b) offer a language learning curriculum, (c) do a needs assessment, (d) determine the best next step for the learner and provide practice with that skill area, (e) record what the student has done, along with an evaluation, and (f) be available at any hour and require no additional pay or benefits. (Chapelle, 2001; cited in Borges, 2014, p. 20)

The last few years' rise in gaming has also filled a function within language learning. Many games provide instructions in other languages and interaction with players from other countries, which demands and enhances second language proficiency.

2.4.2 Films, TV programs, radio, news, & songs

Watching films and TV programs in English and listening to radio, news, and songs in English in order to practice proficiency and learn new vocabulary are common activities for second language (L2) learners both in and outside school. In a study about vocabulary learning strategies (Alharbi, 2015, p. 508) *listening to real conversations and media to learn pronunciation of new words* is listed as one of four variables for listening and pronunciation strategies. In conclusion, the author suggests that the strategies mentioned “should be introduced by teachers and facilitators who work with ESL students on a regular basis” (ibid., p. 508).

2.4.3 Code-switching

Code-switching is the action of switching between two or more languages or varieties of language. As already mentioned, it is not stated in the steering documents for grades seven to nine that teaching should as far as possible be conducted in English. Therefore, the amount of English used by the teacher and the pupils may differ from class to class, since teachers lack guidelines about this. Some schools adapt to a *transitional bilingual education*, which is a model where “the students’ native language is used to provide access to the subject matter for a limited time while the students learn enough English to transition to all-English instruction” (Hinkel, 2014, p. 6).

2.4.4 Teaching culture

Both Brown (2014) and Garrett-Rucks (2015) address that learning a second culture is a part of learning a second language. Intercultural competence plays a significant role for language learning and for international education. It includes the ability to communicate effectively in second languages and global literacy in order to “recognize global interdependence, be capable of working in various environments, and accept responsibility for world citizenship” (Spaulding, Mauch, & Lin, 2010, p. 190). Ways of teaching culture can vary, but key components to look at when doing this are the culture’s values, rituals and traditions (conventionalized behavior patterns), heroes (highly prized people), and symbols (flags, traditional clothing) (Garrett-Rucks, 2015, p. 27).

2.4.5 Sociocultural theory

As mentioned earlier, sociocultural theory claims that human beings develop through interaction with other people and sociocultural components work to enhance communicative competence and to help people communicate effectively (Garrett-Rucks, 2015, p. 40). Seminars, group discussions, and other activities where interaction is the focus are related to this perspective of education and human development. Furthermore, computers and computer-games also fill functions within sociocultural theory. When players develop a passion for a specific game, it will promote engaging with other players, analyzing, discussing, criticizing, and reflecting (Gee & Hayes, 2011, p. 77).

2.4.6 Drama & role-playing

Activities which also are connected to sociocultural theory are drama and role-playing. These have become present in many different forms of education and they have been proven to be effective activities in language teaching and learning. In a previous study (Ustuk & Inan, 2017) about drama in education (DIE), there are various reasons listed for using drama and role-playing.

Teachers can use DIE in the ELT processes to sustain a constructivist learning environment, to influence the sense of cultural awareness, to have an impact on L2 performance, and finally to create an affective learning space. [...] DIE can constitute an interactive, communicative, learner-centred learning experience when used in ELT classes. It can give the learners an opportunity to obtain intercultural experiences in which L2 learners may not only grasp the English language as it is used by the native speakers, but the English language that is used in real life. They can also see how their culture relates to the English as an intercultural language. Additionally, the more DIE is implemented in ELT classrooms by teachers, the more improved L2 performance can be expected to occur. (ibid., p. 37)

3 Aim & research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate what educational approaches and strategies five teachers, at three different compulsory schools, use for English as a second language (ESL) and if the use differs between the schools. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What educational approaches and strategies do the teachers use for teaching ESL in their respective compulsory schools?
2. Do the educational approaches and strategies vary between the different schools?

4 Method & material

The study was structured with different objectives in focus. The first objective was to explore approaches and strategies about second language (L2) teaching and learning. The second objective was to investigate teachers' choices of these. This was done through a questionnaire where a mix between qualitative and quantitative research methods was used. The study, however, is primarily qualitative in its nature. In educational science, qualitative research methods are relevant for various reasons. They play significant roles in the process of research, theory development, evaluation of educational programs and policies, teaching process and also in the formation of professionals (Bohnsack, Pfaff, & Weller, 2010, p. 14).

The questionnaire was designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative results. Five English teachers in grades seven to nine at three different compulsory schools answered a questionnaire about their own strategies for L2 teaching. All the teachers were female and their experiences in teaching ranged from 4–23 years. In order to create relevant questions and to collect reliable data, circumstances, such as steering documents, access to specific teaching aids, and the relative experiences of the different teachers, had to be taken into account (Coe, Waring, Hedges, & Arthur, 2017, p. 88). This background knowledge contributed in creating a valid research structure and, ultimately, in understanding how teachers work in contrast to studies in the field and how the teachers' strategies differ from each other. The theoretical framework which has been adapted for this study is sociocultural theory, for reasons that will be explained under the *theoretical framework* section. This has also contributed to the setting of tone and focus in the study.

The schools of the participating teachers in this study belong to the same municipality in southern Sweden. One of the chosen schools is one with a *dual language education program*, while the other two are schools without an international outline. A dual language education program is a program which provides literacy and content area instruction to all students through two languages in which the goal is to maintain both languages over the long term (Hinkel, 2014, pp. 3 & 8). The selection of the two schools without international outlines was based on their cultural variation. One of the schools is located in an area with a much higher degree of cultural variation than the other, i.e. a greater proportion of the population in this area has a foreign background. The purpose of selecting these three schools as well as the methods of gathering data was to cover as wide variety of social aspects and special alignments as possible.

For this type of study, it is relevant to consider other factors that may affect which approaches and strategies teachers use, e.g. pupils with learning differences such as dyslexia. This may lead to

further questions which are relevant to keep in mind, e.g. to what extent is it possible to follow different strategies? Are there circumstances in specific classes which jeopardize the intended use of strategies? And most important of all, how do the pupils respond to these strategies? However, to limit the study and to not stray from the aim of the essay, the major focus has not been on *why* the schools and teachers work as they do but on *how* they work.

Two major concepts which should permeate any study are *validity* and *reliability*. The research design should “support validity claims about the findings” in the study (Coe et al., 2017, p. 30). A good question to ask oneself is: does this study investigate what it is intended to investigate? It is important that the study presents reliable facts to support its claims.

4.1 Ethical principles

Ethical thinking and practice should be considered throughout the whole research process, i.e. during the collecting of data, the handling and storage of data, and during the writing process. Coe et al. (2017) list different principles (or particular considerations) which should be taken into account during the research process, which include minimizing harm, protecting privacy, and respecting autonomy (p. 59).

When a study involves people, it is particularly relevant to consider ethical principles. This includes giving the participants adequate information about the study so they can decide whether or not to participate: information about how the study will be used and reported, its importance and benefits, potential harm, how it will be conducted (interviews, observations, etc.) and a clarification of the participants’ right to withdraw themselves from the study at any time should be communicated beforehand. Respect for the research participants’ privacy concerning confidentiality and anonymity is also particularly relevant (Coe et al., 2017, p. 38).

4.2 Material

The questionnaire used in this study is based on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version 7.0 (Oxford, 1989), literature and studies about educational strategies for ESL teaching (e.g. Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2015), and results from the report carried out by the Schools Inspectorate (2011). The questionnaire was divided into questions relating to three parts: *your background, structure & focus areas*, and *approaches & strategies during teaching*. Parts one and two were added to the questionnaire to create a better understanding of how external circumstances,

such as teacher experience, focus areas of teaching, collaboration between teachers, and access to computers, iPads and other resources may affect the use of certain educational strategies. Some of these variables could also be used to answer *why* specific educational strategies are used. However, as previously mentioned, this study focuses on *how* educational strategies are used.

The questions relating to parts two and three were both matrix questions (enabling the same kind of response to be given to several questions, e.g. answering 1 or 5) and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are attractive “for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 392), thus eliciting deeper levels of information.

5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used for this particular study is the *sociocultural theory*. It was presented by the Russian thinker and anthropologist Lev Vygotsky during the early 20th century. However, because of the rough political climate in Russia, the theory did not gain significant impact until the second half of the century. After Joseph Stalin’s death, Vygotsky’s work was again published and English translations during the 1960s paved way for the exposure to the West (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015, p. ix). The theory has since then become a major influence on Western education (Gibbons, 2015, p. 13).

This theoretical framework is relevant to this particular study since communication is dependent on interacting with other people and the sociocultural theory is based on the idea of development through social meetings. The following sub-sections describe why this theory is cared for in language education, as well as different approaches within the theory.

5.1 Sociocultural theory in second language education

The sociocultural theory claims that human beings develop through interaction with other people and experiences within social contexts and the environment around them. The most fundamental concept of the theory is that the mind is *mediated* (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1). In other words, humans mediate and regulate relationships with others and themselves in relation to the environments in which they live. Lantolf (2000) states that “Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development implies that learning is also a form of language socialization between individuals and not merely

information processing carried out solo by an individual” (p. 33). The social interaction imposes human development and mediation to a person’s surroundings, according to sociocultural theory.

5.1.1 Zone of proximal development

One of the other concepts found in the sociocultural theory is the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). This concept points at the “difference between what an individual achieves by herself and what she might achieve when assisted” (Swain et al., 2015, p. 16). In practical settings, one may look at who or what it is that assists the learner to develop further than she could have done by herself. Language is, as well as beliefs, attitudes, and books, an artifact which can as much be used as a symbol and trigger mediate learning accordingly to the concept of ZPD.

5.1.2 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is also a popular concept adapted in teaching which is associated with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. It can occur between teacher-pupil as well as pupil-pupil. Scaffolding occurs when “assistance is given when needed and in the quantity and quality needed, and is then gradually dismantled when the structure/individual can mediate (regulate) itself” (Swain et al., 2015, p. 26). A way to do this in the education is to break tasks down into their component parts and let the pupil move from one success to another (Harmer, 2015, p. 151).

5.1.3 Community of practice

Another concept within sociocultural theory is *community of practice* (COP) which focuses more on the social practice within a community or collectives of people (Freeman, 2016, p. 235). It “sees learning as participation in the cultural, historical, political life of the community”, moves intentionally away from school-centered discussion and instead focuses on the setting (Swain et al., 2015, p. 27). Examples of COP in language learning are policies, practices, norms, and rules used in a specific social setting, e.g. if the use of one’s first language (L1) is allowed in a second language (L2) learning setting and what forms of behavior are expected (ibid., p. 27).

6 Analysis & results

6.1 Structure & focus areas

The table below presents the data for the questions in part two (structure & focus areas) along with the teachers' responses to them. The questions are numbered from 1–7. The teachers were asked to answer how well the statements described their teaching on a scale from 1–5. The numbers in the columns to the right indicate both the average (avg.), as well as the lowest and highest figures respectively for each question.

TABLE 6.1			
Q#	1 = Never or almost never true; 2 = Usually not true; 3 = Somewhat true; 4 = Usually true; 5 = Always or almost always true.	Avg.	Low/High
Q1	I manage to <u>challenge</u> all pupils to develop their English	4	4/4
Q2	The focus of my teaching is “communicative ability” (practical use)	4,2	4/5
Q3	We have good collaboration between all English teachers at my school	4,6	4/5
Q4	I have the resources and knowledge to adapt my teaching to every pupil's needs	3,6	2/5
Q5	I allow pupils to influence what we do in the class	3	2/4
Q6	I ask for pupils' ideas when I am planning lessons	3,8	3/5
Q7	I have access to computers/iPads in class	4,6	3/5

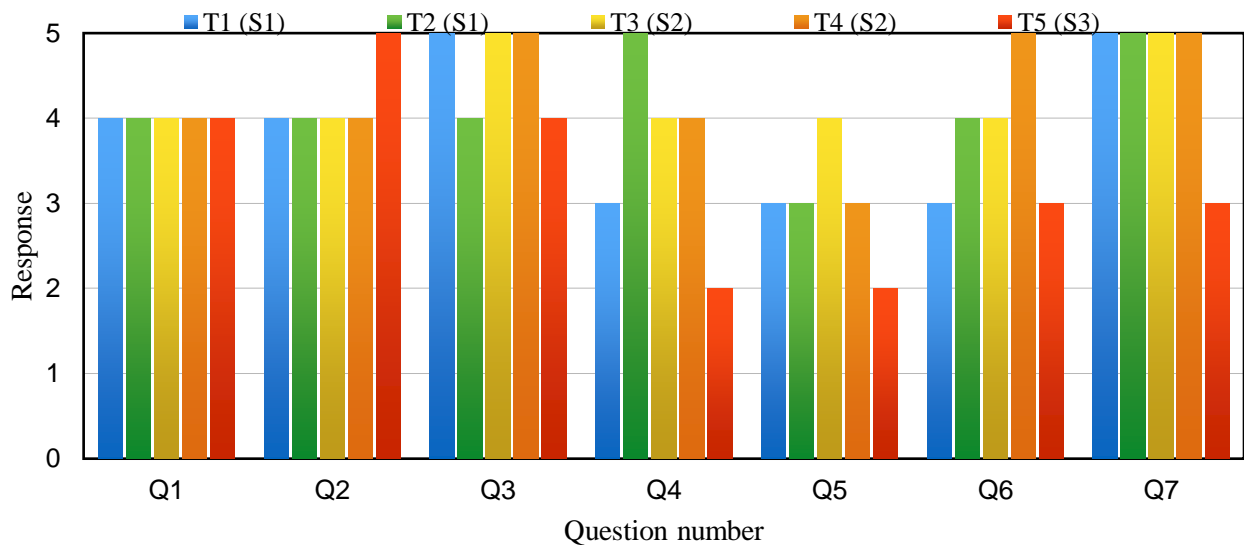


FIGURE 6.1

The figure above shows the specific teachers' responses and differences in part two of the questionnaire (structure & focus areas). Teachers 1 and 2 (T1 and T2) work at the school with the dual language education program (S1), teachers 3 and 4 (T3 and T4) work at the same school (S2), and teacher 5 (T5) works at the school (S3) with a higher degree of cultural variation.

The ambition to challenge the pupils' English language development was on average quite high but also made difficult by the size of the classes and the big differences between the pupils with regard to levels of knowledge. Another challenge mentioned was to be able to help and challenge the pupils who had good grades, since the pupils with difficulties took almost all the time from the teacher. The results show that teachers overall experienced a very high level of collaboration with their colleagues, which contradicts the results found in the Schools Inspectorate's report (Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 7).

Furthermore, the results of this study point to an overall moderate level of allowing pupils to influence what is done in class. According to the Schools Inspectorate, this area should be improved and this study showed results which may support this suggestion. Many teachers claimed to try to encourage an increased pupil influence, but reasons said to be instrumental in making this possible are time pressure for the teachers and an unwillingness from the pupils to do so. The overall impression, according to the teachers, was that pupils express that the procedure of working is fine the way it is. Additionally, the results indicate that almost all the teachers in the study claimed that they possessed the technological resources needed, in terms of computers, to conduct their teaching. The teachers who did not believe this to be the case explained that even though the seventh graders had their own computers, the older pupils had very limited access to such technology.

In summary, the results of the questionnaires give the impression that structure and focus areas are quite similar at the different schools and that no obvious differences between them seem to exist. There are much more similarities between them.

6.2 Approaches & strategies during teaching

The table below presents the data for the questions in part three (approaches & strategies during teaching) along with the teachers' responses to them. The questions are numbered from 1–8. The teachers were asked to answer how well the statements described their teaching on a scale from 1–5. The numbers in the columns to the right indicate both the average (avg.), as well as the lowest and highest figures respectively for each question.

TABLE 6.2			
Q#	1 = Never or almost never true; 2 = Usually not true; 3 = Somewhat true; 4 = Usually true; 5 = Always or almost always true.	Avg.	Low/High
Q1	I include computers/iPads	4	3/5
Q2	I include drama/role-play	3,4	3/4
Q3	I include watching films and TV programs in English	4	2/5
Q4	I include listening to radio, news or songs in English	4,4	4/5
Q5	I alternate between two languages	3,2	1/5
Q6	I encourage the pupils to speak like native English speakers	3,4	2/5
Q7	I teach about the culture of English-speaking countries	5	5/5
Q8	I let the pupils develop through social contexts (discussions and interaction)	5	5/5

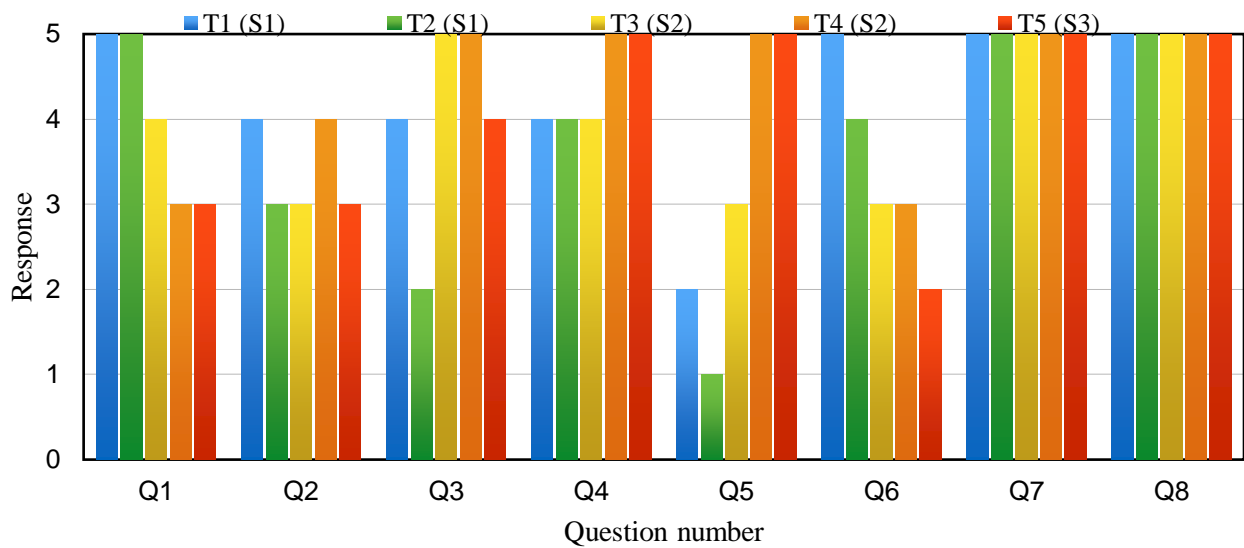


FIGURE 6.2

The figure above shows the specific teachers' responses and differences in part three of the questionnaire (approaches & strategies during teaching).

The results show that there was an overall positive mindset towards including computers and iPads in the education and the results from the questionnaire point at a broad variety of usage areas when it comes to types of applications used in teaching. Different applications for teaching mentioned in the research were Kahoot, YouTube, Quizlet, Padlet, EF Classroom, ReadWorks and ReadTheory. However, the study also shows a skepticism towards this educational strategy with consideration taken to pupils' over-usage of technology and lack of responsibility.

Furthermore, the results indicate a moderate level of including drama in the teaching. This educational strategy was often added in combination to working with other areas and strategies, e.g. when working with literature and other texts or practicing discussion and interaction.

A vast majority of the participating teachers had a positive attitude towards the use of films and TV programs. Many saw them as resources and complements for helping pupils with reading and writing difficulties, creating discussion topics, listening to different accents, and teaching about cultural diversity. However, other participants were not convinced about the positive aspects of films and TV programs and saw them as poor teaching. Although there were varied attitudes towards using films and TV programs, the attitudes towards including listening to radio, news or songs were more similar. The results show that listening to news and songs was used more frequently than listening to radio and also that activities such as relating to themes, answering questions or talking about the content were often carried out in addition to the listening.

The results show a varied use of code-switching in class and they indicate that this strategy had the greatest variety in terms of low and high. The two participating teachers at the dual language education program were native English speakers but they understood Swedish. One of them spoke a little Swedish whereas the other did not speak it, and they only spoke English to their pupils. They allowed pupils to use Swedish to check for understanding, find vocabulary, and, if necessary, ask questions. The other schools had a fairly low usage of Swedish in class. However, some teachers did use it occasionally, while some almost always used it while giving instructions. One specific occasion mentioned in which code-switching occurred was when teaching grammar.

Even though the responses in the matrix questions about encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers differed, the teachers appear to be like-minded in their explanations about what is important in terms of speaking skills. Different accents were presented to the pupils by the teachers but to speak with a particular accent was in general not cared for, whilst pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency concerned the teachers the most. Listening exercises and practicing idiomatic phrases, phrasal English, slang, cultural awareness, and references are activities claimed to be used in order to enhance language proficiency. However, the results indicate that the most concern for this topic was found in the dual language education program, while the school with a higher degree of cultural variation had the least concern for this.

The results show that one of the two most frequently used strategies was to include teaching about the culture of English-speaking countries. The content stressed in these lessons included behaviors and traditions in comparison to Sweden, a country's history and geography, etc. Some of this content is also addressed in the literature as important factors of language learning (Garrett-Rucks, 2015, p. 27). The other most frequently used strategy among the participating teachers was to let their pupils develop through social contexts. All of the teachers highly valued discussion and interaction for reasons such as complementing other topics, preparing for writing assignments, encouraging fluency and accuracy, and creating comfortable language use. Activities mentioned were e.g. debates about politics and moral values, such as the environment and treatment of animals.

7 Conclusion

This study has shown a variety of approaches and strategies used for teaching English as a second language (ESL). Data found in the study made it possible to answer the first research question; what educational approaches and strategies do the teachers use for teaching ESL in their respective compulsory schools? Some strategies were used more than others and the results from the questionnaires also showed differences in attitudes towards the different strategies. The approaches and strategies which gained focus were: using computers, including drama and role-playing, watching films and TV programs in English, listening to radio, news or songs in English, using code-switching, teaching about cultures where English is spoken, encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers, and promoting discussions and social interaction. These gained focus mainly because of their wide exposure and coverage in the literature and steering documents, and the results of the questionnaires also indicated proof of their wide usage. However, since the questionnaire was built on these approaches and strategies, it is possible that others could have gained focus in a different study.

The other aim of the study was to investigate if there were any differences between the schools regarding the use of these approaches and strategies. Of the eight ones investigated, it was only possible to see clear differences between the schools in two of them, viz. using code-switching and encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers. As Figure 7.2 indicates, at the dual language education program, code-switching occurred very little, while it occurred more often at the other schools.

The most concern for encouraging pupils to speak like native speakers was also found at the dual language education program, even though similar attention to pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency was found at other schools. The least concern for this strategy was found at the school with a higher degree of cultural variation, where almost all instructions were spoken in Swedish. This may be the case because of already existing language barriers, which are naturally enhanced by a higher degree of cultural variation. The most similar responses were indicated for teaching about cultures where English is spoken and for promoting discussions and social interactions. These strategies were indicated with a (5) by all teachers.

One facet to consider is that the responses shown in the tables and figures are the teachers' own perceptions of the questions in the questionnaire. One cannot leave out that the teachers interpreted the questions differently, e.g. what indicates a response of (5) by one teacher may be valued as (3) by another. Therefore, the results may turn out different if one would observe teachers' behavior

instead. However, one of the reasons for recognizing misinterpretations was to add open-ended questions to the questionnaire. To minimize the risk of misinterpretations, more specific descriptions of each question could be made for future studies. Additionally, in order to cover a wider spectrum of responses, more teachers could also have been featured in the study.

This study contributes to the field of research by presenting knowledge about second language teaching and learning and strategies for second language teaching. The essay also contributes by offering ideas, both to experienced and less experienced teachers, about how to conduct second language education in their classrooms.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Teachers' responses

The teachers' responses to the questionnaire can be obtained upon request.

9.2 Questionnaire outline

Read and answer the questions/statements. Answer in terms of how well the questions/statement describes you. **Do not answer how you think it should be.** There are no right or wrong answers.

Your background

1. For how long have you been teaching? For how long have you been teaching English?

2. How many schools have you been teaching at?

3. What languages do you speak? What language(s) do you speak at home? Have you ever lived abroad? Further comments regarding your language experience...

Structure & focus areas

How well do these statements describe your teaching? Mark your choice (1-5) and give an explanation (How? Why? Why not? Challenges?)

1. Never or almost never true

2. Usually not true

3. Somewhat true

4. Usually true

5. Always or almost always true

4. I manage to challenge all pupils to develop their English

1 2 3 4 5

5. The focus of my teaching is “communicative ability” (practical use)

1 2 3 4 5

6. We have good collaboration between all English teachers at my school

1 2 3 4 5

7. I have the resources and knowledge to adapt my teaching to every pupil's needs

1 2 3 4 5

8. I allow pupils to influence what we do in the class

1 2 3 4 5

9. I ask for pupils' ideas when I am planning lessons

1 2 3 4 5

10. I have access to computers/iPads in class

1 2 3 4 5

Approaches & strategies during teaching

How well do these statements describe your teaching? Mark your choice (1-5) and give an explanation (How? Why? Why not? Challenges?)

- 1. Never or almost never true
- 2. Usually not true
- 3. Somewhat true
- 4. Usually true
- 5. Always or almost always true

11. I include computers/iPads

1 2 3 4 5

12. I include drama/role-play

1 2 3 4 5

13. I include watching films and TV programs in English

1 2 3 4 5

14. I include listening to radio, news or songs in English

1 2 3 4 5

15. I alternate between two languages (If so, in what situations do you use which language?)

1 2 3 4 5

16. I encourage the pupils to speak like native English speakers

1 2 3 4 5

17. I teach about the culture of English-speaking countries

1 2 3 4 5

18. I let the pupils develop through social contexts (discussions and interaction)

1 2 3 4 5
