Oral communication in the English language classroom

A study of the attitudes of some English teachers and 9th grade pupils in Sweden towards oral communication in the English classroom

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Abstract

The overall aim of this essay was to investigate what attitudes some English teachers and pupils in 9th grade in Sweden have towards oral communication in the teaching of English. I wanted to find out why oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English, what factors teachers and pupils believe contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom and what English teachers think of the assessment of pupils’ ability to express themselves orally in English. I have interviewed three English teachers, and 85 pupils in 9th grade have answered a questionnaire.

The results show that the teachers and a majority of the pupils think that oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English, mainly because of the fact that being able to express yourself orally in English today is of great importance and because through this the pupils get to use the English language a lot themselves. Factors that contribute to verbally active pupils in the English classroom are a safe classroom atmosphere, pupils’ self-esteem, small groups, meaningful assignments, enthusiastic and encouraging teachers and motivated pupils. The results also show that the teachers believe that the assessment of pupils’ oral ability is hard because it is not as concrete as other skills that they assess in the English foreign language classroom. Other reasons why the assessment is hard are the problem of getting shy or unmotivated pupils to participate orally and lack of time.
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1. Introduction

We live in an international world today where our ability to communicate in English is of great importance. The national syllabus for English in the Swedish compulsory school clearly emphasizes this by stating that English “is the dominant language of communication throughout the world. The ability to use English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]).

In school within the subject of English it is vital that the pupils are given many opportunities to use their English and practice how to communicate verbally and express themselves in English. The national syllabus for English points out that each pupil at the end of year nine in compulsory school should “be able to actively take part in discussions on familiar subjects and with the help of different strategies communicate effectively” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]).

When teaching oral communication in English as a foreign language it is of great importance for the teacher to consider that our emotions, or the affective domain, have a significant impact on foreign language learning. One of the factors in the affective domain is self-esteem. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998, in Brown 2000:146) examined how learners’ self-esteem affected their communicative activity in the target language and they noted that even though a language learner is communicatively competent it does not necessarily accord with “a high willingness to communicate”.

Tornberg (1997) points out that pupils studying a foreign language usually think that it is important to be able to speak the target language but in order for the pupils to be able to communicate orally in the target language a certain amount of self-esteem among the pupils is required. Tornberg (1997:45) explains this further by saying that “the pupil has to more or less decide to dare to throw oneself into that uncertainty that limited language knowledge mean” [my translation].

Over the years I have developed a sincere interest in the oral part of the teaching of English as a foreign language. In my teaching experience I have become aware of the fact that it is quite hard to get all pupils to take an active part in discussions and conversations in English. Many pupils, despite the fact that they have excellent English skills, are very quiet in class when practicing oral communication. To me it seems like a great challenge for an English teacher to motivate and encourage all pupils to be orally active in the English foreign language classroom. It also seems hard for the English teacher to assess the pupils’ ability to
communicate orally in English because of the fact that the pupils’ oral activity is closely linked to their emotions.

The overall aim of this essay is to investigate what attitudes some English teachers and pupils in 9th grade in Sweden have towards oral communication in the English foreign language classroom. More specific research questions are:

- Why is oral communication an important part of the teaching of English as a foreign language?
- What factors contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom?
- What do English teachers think of the assessment of pupils’ ability to express themselves orally in English?

I have interviewed three teachers who all teach English as a foreign language in 9th grade, and 85 pupils in 9th grade have answered a questionnaire about oral communication.

2. Previous work

2.1 Communicative competence

2.1.1 Definition of the concept
The term Communicative competence was introduced by Dell Hymes in the 1970s. Hymes argued that besides having grammatical knowledge about a language the social and functional aspects of a language are equally important. Hymes explained the term communicative competence as “that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific context” (Brown 2000:246). Communicative competence is a combination of four different competences. To be communicatively competent, according to Hymes, means that a person, apart from having grammatical competence, knows if an utterance is feasible or not, if it is appropriate or not and also if it is accepted usage (Tornberg 1997:40).

The spoken communicative skill is complex. Since the utterances cannot be prepared in advance in a conversation a rather rapid usage of the language is required of the participants and what is being said must be right on a number of levels, that is “it must conform to the
speaker’s aim, to the role relationships between the interactants, to the setting, topic, linguistic context etc” (Johnson & Morrow 1986:11).

2.1.2 Communicative competence and Swedish curricular documents
Since the 1970s foreign language teaching in Sweden has focused on communication where the pupils have been taught to use the language in a communicative context (Tornberg 1997: 40-41). The current Swedish curriculum for the compulsory school states in its Goals and guidelines that school has to ensure that all pupils completing compulsory school “can communicate in speech and writing in English” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]). Further the current national syllabus for English in the Swedish compulsory school states that the school should aim for the pupils developing “an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts”. The syllabus points out that the aim for pupils in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades should be that they:

(1)...develop their ability to use English to communicate in speech
(2)...develop their ability to actively take part in discussions and express their own thoughts in English, as well as understand the views and experiences of others
(3)...develop their ability to use English orally in different contexts in order to relate, describe and explain, as well as give reasons for their views (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]).

The national syllabus for English in the Swedish compulsory school also contains goals that the pupil should have attained by the end of the ninth year in school in order to get a G in English. The goals which concern oral communication state that each pupil in school should:

(1)…be able to actively take part in discussions on familiar subjects and with the help of different strategies communicate effectively
(2)…be able to orally relate and describe something which they have seen, heard, experienced or read, as well as express and give their reasons on how they understand a topic that is of personal importance (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]).

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When it comes to the assessment of the pupils’ ability to interact verbally the national syllabus for English claims that the assessment of these interactive skills should be based on a pupil’s ability “to start, contribute to, develop and end a conversation”. Further a pupil should be assessed on his or her ability “to interpret different situations and adjust his or her language usage to the situation and receiver” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www my translation]). The statement in the syllabus, that pupils learn to communicate in and adapt their language to different contexts, is similar to the way Hymes described communicative competence (see Section 2.1.1).

According to the national syllabus English teachers should not only assess pupils’ English skills when practicing oral communication but also how the pupils manage to solve various language problems when their knowledge of English is not enough. Here, the syllabus for English points out that English teachers should encourage their pupils “to compensate for this by using strategies, such as reformulating, or using synonyms, questions and body language” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www my translation]).

The national test in English for pupils in 9th grade contains three parts where one (part A) tests the pupils’ ability to take part in a conversation and present something orally in English. The National Agency for Education claims that a pupil can pass the test even though he or she lacks relevant language knowledge as long as the communication works and the pupil is being understood (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www my translation]).

2.2 Communication in foreign language teaching – a survey

2.2.1. Structuralism and behaviourism
In the 1940s and 1950s a structuralist view among linguists was dominant. The structuralist linguists described languages and different components of a language were scientifically identified. The structural school only investigated the evident data. Things like consciousness and intuition were not observable areas. In the 1960s a behaviouristic paradigm evolved from the structuralistic view. The behaviouristic approach used empirical methods when studying human behaviour and claimed that organisms through the right reinforcement and stimuli could be trained to respond in a certain way (Brown 2000:8-9). The scientist B.E. Skinner and other behaviourists viewed language as behaviour; that is they saw language as verbal habits which have been acquired by the speaker through imitations and rewards (Littlewood 1992:38).
Foreign language teaching was influenced by these beliefs for decades where the pupils learnt the target language through imitation and different types of pattern drill (Ericsson 1993:106). Newmark (1966) points out the problem of foreign language learners who have the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but who are unable to communicate correctly in the target language. Newmark refers to these pupils as structurally competent (Newmark in Johnson & Morrow etc.) 1981:1).

2.2.2 Rationalism and cognitivism
In the 1960s Noam Chomsky created the generative-transformational school of linguistics. Chomsky claimed that that it was not enough only to describe the languages through outer stimuli and responses. He argued that linguistics needed to add an explanatory level in their description of languages. Cognitive psychologists used rational methods in order to investigate the underlying psychological structures of human behaviour (Brown 2000: 9-10). Chomsky claimed that language learning is genetically conditioned. According to Chomsky all humans are born with a native ability to acquire a language and that language develops automatically within us when we are exposed to our surroundings (Ericsson 1993:106). The cognitive theory of second language acquisition focuses on the learner. Chomsky argued that what should interest linguists the most was the development of the cognitive systems within us. According to Chomsky these internal systems enable us to use language creatively and through them “we can produce and understand sentences which we have never come across before, in order to meet the unpredictable demands of daily communication” (Littlewood 1992: 39).

2.2.3 Constructivism and social constructivism
Since the 1980s the constructive perspective has dominated the theory of second language acquisition. Constructivists claim that all individuals create their own notion of reality and because of this different ways of describing and knowing must be accepted (Brown 2000:11-12).

Constructive researchers have investigated second language acquisition by “conversational discourse, sociocultural factors, and interactionist theories” (ibid 12). The social constructivist perspectives focus on language as communication between individuals. This has influenced foreign language teaching which started to be regarded as “creation of meaning through interactive negotiation among learners” (Brown 2000:245). This is explained further by Brown (2000):
The social constructivist perspectives that are associated with more current approaches to both first and second language acquisition emphasize the dynamic nature of the interplay between learners and their peers and their teachers and others with whom they interact. The interpersonal context in which a learner operates takes on great significance, and therefore, the interaction between learners and others is the focus of observation and explanation (Brown 2000:286-287).

In conclusion it is only in the last of the different language learning theories, i.e. social constructivism, that oral communication has been in focus.

2.3 Factors relevant to oral communication in the foreign language classroom

2.3.1 The teaching situation

Lightbown & Spada point out two different ways of instructing pupils when teaching a foreign language, where the traditional instruction environment focuses on learning the target language itself and the communicative instruction environment emphasizes using the target language in conversations and other interactive language activities (Lightbown & Spada 1999:70). According to Lightbown & Spada (1999:73) the traditional structure-based approach to foreign language teaching emphasizes on practicing isolated grammatical structures and through this creating habits whereas the communicative approach focuses on communicating meaning. In the communicative approach teaching only focuses on grammar in order to make the communication work (ibid).

All language teachers should strive for pupils becoming communicatively competent. In order for this to happen the teacher should encourage the pupils’ own initiative to express themselves orally in the target language classroom (Ericsson 1993:217). A learner-centred activity such as group work, which forces pupils to talk to each other spontaneously asking each other questions and responding in a natural way, is one example of how this can be practiced. Through group-work “students produce not only a greater quantity but also a greater variety of language functions (for example, disagreeing, hypothesizing, requesting, clarifying, and defining)” (Lightbown & Spada 1999:85).
Brumfit (in Johnson & Morrow 1986:48) claims that pupils in the foreign language classroom should frequently be exposed to the target language and the pupils should be given many opportunities to use the language. Further Brumfit points out that foreign language pupils learn the target language by using the language systematically and by experimenting with these systems which they have created. Brumfit explains this in the following way:

Traditionally in the foreign language classroom students have been encouraged to produce more or less what they have been taught. However, if we are to allow for the really large-scale exposure which is now possible, we also need to allow considerable opportunities for students to exercise themselves in fluency work which will encourage them to experiment with what they have heard or read. (ibid)

2.3.2 Motivation
Learning is an active process within the pupil and when acquiring new knowledge motivation has a decisive influence on the result (Ericsson 1993:74-75). With the increased emphasis on communication in the foreign language classroom a very challenging task for foreign language teachers is to get the pupils to take active part in conversations where they express themselves freely. A reason why this can be hard is the fact that pupils do not really have a real reason to talk to each other and the language classroom many times feels artificial to them. Ur (2005:5-6) claims that in order to get the pupils to communicate with each other and express themselves freely in the target language it is necessary to use interesting topics, but more importantly the discourse must have a meaningful purpose.

A language can never be regarded as an isolated phenomenon but instead language should always be taught and practiced in a context (Ericsson 1993:49). In the 60s Ausubel distinguished between rote learning and meaningful learning, where he argued that different items of a language should not be acquired separately. According to Ausubel language should be acquired in a meaningful way (in Brown 2000: 61). Brown explains this further by claiming that:

The foreign language classroom should not become the locus of excessive rote activity: rote drills, pattern practice without context, rule recitation, and other activities that are not in the context of meaningful communication (ibid: 63)
Tornberg (1997:17) points out how important it is that pupils understand that what they practice and learn in the foreign language classroom is meant to be used outside the classroom situation, in reality. According to Tornberg pupils tend to associate foreign language teaching only with what they practice in the classroom. Ur (2005:9) also mentions the importance of using exercises in the foreign language classroom that are useful to the pupils outside school. Ur points out the advantage of letting the pupils practice oral communication through role-play since role-play “is close to genuine discourse and provides useful practice in the kinds of language the learners may eventually need to use in similar situations outside the classroom”.

Granath & Estling Vannestål (2008) suggest that language teachers could use the Internet for meaningful communication in the foreign language classroom. Through the Internet language teachers have the possibility of letting the pupils practice communicating in an authentic context. According to Granath & Estling Vannestål language teachers use the computer in their teaching mostly for word-processing and information search and very few language teachers use the computer for authentic communication. The pupils in the English foreign language classroom could for instance communicate with pupils in different parts of the world via e-mail, chats or communicate orally via for instance Windows Live Messenger or Skype. They could also participate in an authentic discussion forum on the Internet provided by for example Le Monde or BBC. Granath & Estling Vannestål mention that even though some of these types of communication are written, most of them use a form of language that is similar to spoken language (ibid).

2.3.3 Self-esteem

Our emotions, or the affective domain, have a significant impact on foreign language learning. Even though linguists agree on this it is difficult to describe the factors scientifically (Brown 2000: 142-143). In the 1960s Benjamin Bloom defined the affective domain in five levels which involve the notion of receiving, responding and valuing. This is explained as follows:

Second language learners need to be receptive both to those with whom they are communicating and to the language itself, responsive to persons and to the context of communication, and willing and able to place a certain value on the communicative act of interpersonal exchange (Brown 2000:144).
One of the factors of the affective domain is self-esteem. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998, in Brown 2000:146) examined the relation between self-esteem and a learner’s willingness to communicate in the target language. They noted that “a high level of communicative ability does not necessarily correspond with a high willingness to communicate.”

Tornberg points out that pupils who study a foreign language usually think that it is important to be able to speak the language. However according to Tornberg to be able to communicate in the target language a certain amount of self-esteem is required: “The pupil has to more or less decide to dare to throw him-/herself into that uncertainty that limited language knowledge mean” (Tornberg 1997: 45, my translation). Brown (2000:150) also mentions the importance of pupils being courageous in the foreign language classroom and points out that a pupil’s self-esteem is stimulated by a classroom climate where the pupils accept each other. This can also be related to Stephen Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, where Krashen claims that foreign language acquisition will happen “in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent” (Brown 2000: 279).

3. Method and material
My investigation consists of both a qualitative and a quantitative study. To find out what attitudes English teachers have towards oral communication in their teaching of English as a foreign language I used a qualitative study where I interviewed three teachers who all teach English in 9th grade. To find out what attitudes pupils in 9th grade have towards oral communication in the English foreign language classroom I used a quantitative study where 85 pupils answered a questionnaire.

3.1 Method
The method of interviewing the teachers was chosen because I wanted to get access to their attitudes towards oral communication in the English foreign language classroom. Through this the subjects would be able to answer in their own words and it would enable me to ask follow-up questions. Here, a semi-structured interview form, where all the questions were prepared in advance and put together in an interview guide (see Appendix 1), was chosen to enable the interviews to be of the same kind and also because the answers would be easier to analyze and structure in the Result and analysis chapter of the essay.
The English teachers who participated in my investigation were contacted by e-mail. All of them work as English teachers at schools which I came in contact with during my teacher training. Before we met for the interview I asked for their approval of recording the interviews, which they all accepted. I also guaranteed their anonymity. A recording equipment was used in order for me to relax during the interviews and to be able to fully concentrate on the interviewees. It also enabled me to quote the teachers in the presentation of the results. The interviews were carried out in Swedish since none of the teachers were native speakers of English. The estimated time for each interview was half an hour. When the three interviews were completed I wrote a transcript of them. This was done to help me get an overview of the answers from the interviewees and to make it easier for me to categorize their answers. I also asked the teachers if I could come back to the school and hand out a questionnaire about oral communication to pupils in 9th grade, something which two of the interviewed teachers accepted.

To investigate pupils’ attitudes a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was being used. This method was chosen since the aim was to get access to as many pupils’ opinions as possible. The questionnaire consists of both multiple-choice questions, where in some cases I had left room for personal comments, and a few open questions where the pupils were asked to formulate their own answers. This was done to give the pupils a chance to answer more freely and it also enabled me to quote the pupils in the presentation of my results. In each class I handed out the questionnaire personally. This was done in order for me to be able to inform the pupils about the investigation and guarantee their anonymity. All the pupils who participated in my investigation answered the questionnaire voluntarily and individually.

3.2 Material

Three English teachers, who were chosen to be interviewed, all attended their language teaching training after 1994, which is the year when the current curriculum was introduced in the Swedish compulsory school. The three English teachers whom I interviewed for my essay are all female and they have been working as upper-secondary-level language teachers for about six-seven years. In the presentation of the results from the interviews the interviewed teachers are presented by the fictitious names Emma, Sara and Linn. Except for English they also teach Swedish at three different upper compulsory schools in the south of Sweden. All three schools are public schools with about 500-600 pupils.
The pupils who participated in my investigation come from three different classes in 9th grade from two of the schools where the interviews of the English teachers who participated in my investigation were carried out. None of the teachers whom I interviewed in my investigation teach the 85 pupils who participated in my investigation.

3.3 Problems and limitations

Oral communication in the teaching of English as a foreign language involves many different aspects of the English spoken language. For instance, the pupils can read different types of texts or dialogues aloud or they can present something that they have prepared in advance to the class. In my essay I have limited my investigation of the oral part of the teaching of English as a foreign language to conversations where the pupils express themselves freely and where they use their spoken English spontaneously in the classroom. I have not looked into pupils’ communication in English outside the classroom contexts such as on the Internet.

Since my investigation consists of both a qualitative and a quantitative study I had to limit my investigation of what pupils think of oral communication to three classes of pupils in 9th grade. Because of the limited amount of time I have not been able to compare the pupil’s answers in relation to gender, age, skills or type of school. Out of a total of 91 pupils in the classes 85 answered the questionnaire since a few were absent on the day of my visit.

Initially five English teachers at three different schools in the south of Sweden were contacted by me by e-mail. All the teachers e-mailed back within a week. Two of the teachers did not have time to be interviewed. I decided that interviewing three English teachers was enough since a questionnaire was also going to be part of my investigation.

It was a good idea to interview the teachers even though it was harder than expected to follow up the answers from my interviewees with additional questions. It might have been better to use qualitative interviews on a few pupils as well instead of using a questionnaire. The result from the questionnaires shows that many pupils did not answer the open questions and fewer pupils than expected wrote a complementary comment. One explanation of this could be the fact that many pupils do not feel personally involved when answering a questionnaire like this and also many of them are not used to reflecting on these types of questions. The last question in my questionnaire (see Appendix 2) about the teacher’s assessment of skilled but shy pupils was completely misunderstood by the pupils. A majority of the pupils did not answer the question at all, and those who did answer gave other examples of what the teachers should assess (such as only assessing the pupils’ ability to
express themselves in writing or how the pupils do on tests). Because of this misunderstanding the answers from this question will not be included in the presentation of the results.

My investigation is a case study and I do realize that the result cannot be generalized. One aspect that might have influenced the results of my investigation is the fact that the investigation was carried out in the spring. This is a time when many English teachers spend a lot of time preparing the pupils for the national test of English and they might practice and emphasize the oral part of their teaching more than they normally do in their lessons. The fact that the teachers have such similar backgrounds may also have influenced the results. The results could have been quite different if a more heterogeneous group of teachers had been interviewed.

4. Results

4.1 Results of teachers’ interviews

In my presentation of the results I will analyze and discuss the answers from the interviews and connect the result to the previous work in my essay. The quotes from the interviewed teachers were translated into English.

4.1.1 Why oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English as a foreign language

All three teachers refer to the curricular documents when explaining why they think oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English as a foreign language. One of the teachers (Emma) says:

“Practicing oral communication is important because the syllabus for English and the curriculum say that English teachers should provide the pupils with different assignments where they practice speaking English.”

It is interesting to note that the teachers mention the curricular documents first of all when answering this question. This indicates that teachers nowadays are well-aware of how important it is to follow the directions of the curricular documents as a teacher.
The teachers specifically refer to the goals to attend in the syllabus for English. As mentioned above the national syllabus for English in the Swedish compulsory school contains goals that the pupil should have attained by the end of the ninth year in school in order to get a G in English (The Swedish National Agency for Education www). One teacher (Emma) refers to these goals by saying:

“It is important that English teachers work with this in order to enable the pupils to achieve the goals about oral communication that are to be found in the syllabus for English. My job as an English teacher is to see to it that all my pupils get at least a G in English and for that the ability to communicate orally is a must.”

Two of the teachers (Emma, Linn) also refer to the national test of English in their answer. One teacher (Emma) says:

“English teachers should work with oral communication to prepare the pupils for the oral part of the national test of English.”

Another reason why the teachers think it is important to practice oral communication in English is that through this the pupils use the target language a lot themselves in different interactive situations. All the teachers believe that the pupils improve their skills of English from listening and talking to others. This indicates that the teachers who participated in this investigation believe in the communicative instruction environment which according to Lightbown & Spada emphasizes using the target language in conversations and other interactive language activities (Lightbown & Spada 1999:70).

One of the teachers adds that besides practicing the language skills that the pupils have acquired they “also learn how to make a conversation in English work although they don’t have the correct word or expression” (Sara). This opinion, which is expressed by all the teachers, is in accord with the national syllabus for English which states that English teachers in the Swedish compulsory school should aim at pupils developing “an all-round communicative ability” and that the teachers should encourage their pupils to compensate for their lack of language knowledge “by using strategies, such as reformulating, or using synonyms, questions and body language” (The Swedish National Agency for Education www my translation). This opinion also agrees with Brumfit’s notion of the fact that pupils in the foreign language classroom should be given many opportunities to use the language in order
to develop fluency. According to Brumfit foreign language pupils learn the target language by experimenting with the different language systems which they have created (Brumfit in Johnson & Morrow 1986:48).

Another reason why oral communication is important in the teaching of English according to the teachers is the fact that it is important to know how to express oneself in English in the world today. One teacher (Sara) says:

"It is important that the pupils develop their ability to communicate orally in English for their own sake, for their future."

This is in accord with the syllabus for English which points out that English “is the dominant language of communication throughout the world” and that “English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds” (The Swedish National Agency for Education [www]).

**4.1.2 Factors that contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom**

The teachers mention that an important factor which contributes to orally active pupils in English is that the pupils feel confident in the classroom. One of the teachers (Emma) expresses this opinion by saying:

“The key word is a safe classroom climate. If they believe in themselves, accept and trust each other and if they know me well that is of great importance.”

The fact that a safe classroom climate is important in the work of creating a communicative language classroom is clear. All teachers mention the problem with shy pupils. One of the teachers (Emma) explains that:

“In every class there are a few pupils who are very insecure of themselves and because of this they are very quiet in class and that is truly difficult to deal with.”

In addition the teachers mention another significant factor: enthusiastic and encouraging language teachers. They all point out what an important part the teacher plays in the work of
getting the pupils orally active in the foreign language classroom. One teacher (Linn) motivates her opinion by saying:

“The teacher must inspire the pupils, encourage them and support them.”

Another teacher (Emma) says that:

“The teacher should try to make them accept each other and believe in themselves and their ability.”

All teachers point out their own responsibility in getting the shy pupils to express themselves in the foreign language classroom. One teacher (Emma) explains that:

“It is my responsibility to create situations where shy pupils can be able to show what they can. Smaller groups for instance. Sometimes I have to take them aside and talk to them alone.”

The opinions about a safe classroom climate and the pupils’ self-esteem expressed by the teachers can be related to one of Stephen Krashen’s five hypotheses, *The Affective Filter Hypothesis*, where Krashen claims that foreign language acquisition will happen “in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent” (Brown 2000: 279).

Another factor, which is mentioned by all three teachers, is the importance of letting the pupils practice oral communication in small groups and that the shy pupils need to practice oral communication with classmates that they feel comfortable working with. One teacher (Sara) says:

“It’s tough for the shy pupils since they don’t get to show what they can. I try to see to it that the shy pupils work with someone who they feel secure with. If they are secure they speak more.”

But even though the teachers point out that small groups are important the teachers mention in their answers that this is not always easy for them to organize. One teacher (Emma) says:

“I would like to work with oral communication in smaller groups, all pupils benefit from that, especially the shy ones. It is hard to practice oral communication now since I have
so many pupils in each class. It would have been wonderful to be able to sit and talk to one or two pupils at the time.”

Furthermore the teachers mention that the pupils’ own motivation is a significant factor which contributes to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom. When saying this the teachers at the same time point out another significant factor, which is the importance of using meaningful assignments that are interesting to the pupils. One of the teachers (Sara) explains this further by saying:

“The assignment itself is of great importance. The speaking situation must be interesting and meaningful to the pupils. They must have the opportunity to decide what they want to talk about so that they don’t feel forced to discuss something that they are not interested in.”

Another teacher (Linn) says:

“Teenagers are easily bored. Teachers must come up with fun and various assignments that concern the pupils.”

Two of the teachers (Emma, Sara) specifically say that one reason why it is hard getting all pupils to participate actively orally is the problem of creating real conversational situations in the English foreign language classroom. One teacher (Sara) motivates her opinion by saying:

“I believe that the most common reason why it is hard to get the pupils to express themselves freely in English is the fact that the situation is not real.”

She explains this further by saying:

“The natural way for them to communicate is after all Swedish and as long as I’m there they have to use English but once I’m gone many of the pupils start to speak Swedish instead.”

Another teacher (Emma) says:
“One negative aspect is the fact that the conversations between the pupils or between me and the pupils are always artificial in a way. The pupils never really talk to each other or address me in a truly natural talking situation. Sure it gets spontaneous in a way but still everyone knows that it is far from authentic.”

These opinions are in accord with Ur’s opinion about the fact that the most challenging task for foreign language teachers is to get the pupils to take active part in conversations where they express themselves freely. A reason why this can be hard according to Ur is, just like the teachers of this investigation mention, that pupils do not have a real reason to talk to each other and the language classroom many times feels artificial to them (Ur 2005:5-6).

The teachers’ opinions also agree with Ausubel’s opinion about meaningful learning. According to Ausubel different items of a language should not be acquired separately. Rather a foreign language should be acquired through different activities which involve meaningful communication (in Brown 2000: 61-63).

Further the teachers’ reflections on the non-authenticity of the communicative situation can be related to Granath & Estling Vannestål’s opinions about using the Internet more in foreign language teaching. According to Granath & Estling Vannestål (2008) language teachers can let the pupils in the foreign language classroom use the Internet for communicating with pupils in different parts of the world by e-mail, discussion forums, chatting, instant messaging or net-based telephony. This could be one way of motivating the pupils in the language classroom.

In addition the teachers point out that the pupils’ motivation also involves a personal engagement from the pupils. According to the teachers it is important that they show a genuine interest in learning English. One teacher (Sara) says:

“The pupils must participate actively and not just say something when they are absolutely sure. The pupils should pay attention to the assignments and always make the most out of every situation.”

In fact all the teachers mention that they think that a majority of the pupils think it is fun to speak English and that they believe that most of the pupils think that this part of the teaching of English is important. One teacher (Linn) says:
“Most of them like speaking English. I think many of them feel that it is the part they are best at. Through the computer they get in contact with spoken English and practice this a lot themselves. But of course there are always a few who lack a motivation to learn.”

This opinion can again be related to what Granath & Estling Vannestål (2008) say about Internet communication in the foreign language classroom.

4.1.3 The assessment of the pupils’ ability to communicate orally

The teachers answer that they think the assessment of the pupils’ ability to express themselves orally in English is harder than anything else they assess in the English foreign language classroom. One of them (Emma) explains this further by saying:

“It’s harder to assess oral communication since it is not as concrete as for instance a listening comprehension or a written test that the pupils have studied for.”

Another reason why the assessment is hard according to the teachers is lack of time. One teacher (Emma) says:

“You never have as much time as you wish, it is not possible to talk to each pupil face to face. You simply can’t do that when you have 30 pupils in class.”

Another teacher (Linn) says:

“It’s hard to be able to listen to all the pupils when they sit and talk to each other in groups or in pairs. I walk around and try to listen to as many pupils as possible but it is difficult to get a clear picture of what every pupil said or how they participated in the assignment.”

Only one teacher (Emma) mentions that she has tried to record the pupils when they speak as a complement to her assessment of the pupils. But she has only tried this once since “it takes forever to listen through the material afterwards”.

Another thing which makes the assessment hard according to the teachers is the problem of getting all the pupils to participate in conversations in English. One teacher mentions that the assessment of the pupils’ oral ability is tough because of the fact that some of the pupils do not always “take the situation seriously” (Sara). Another teacher (Emma) says:
“I try to talk as much English with them as possible. But it is hard because the skilled pupils answer back in English, some answer in Swedish and some don’t want to answer at all. So it is not always that the communication works and then I don’t have all that much to assess.”

All the teachers point out that the assessment of the pupils’ ability to express themselves orally is particularly hard in the assessment of the shy pupils. One teacher (Sara) says:

“You have to be sensitive when assessing oral communication and it can get complicated when you have shy pupils in class.”

Two of the teachers (Emma, Linn) add however that the assessment of the shy pupils’ oral activity is easier in 9th grade. One teacher (Emma) explains this by saying:

“Usually they speak sometimes anyway. It is so much easier to assess their ability to communicate orally now in 9th grade when I know the pupils so well.”

4.2 Results of pupils’ questionnaire

Each question from the questionnaire was translated into English and will be presented separately with a table. After each table the data will be described a bit more thoroughly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not fun at all</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite fun</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very fun</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the pupils are positive towards the subject of English. 62% of the pupils answer that English is “fun” or “very fun”. Only 4% of the pupils who participated in the investigation refer to English as “not fun at all”. This result agrees to some extent with a
national survey which established that many Swedish pupils think that English is one of the most important subjects in school (Lundahl in Estling Vannestål 2002).

**Table 2. Are you good at English?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not good at all</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite good</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear majority, 72% of the pupils, view themselves as “good” or “very good” at English. It is interesting to compare this to the fact that 62% of the pupils say that English is “fun” or “very fun” in Table 1. These results agree with the general attitude among Swedes and people outside Sweden: that we are good at English in Sweden.

**Table 3. What do you think is the most important skill of English? (Rank with 1, 2 and 3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86% of the pupils answer that they think speaking is the most important skill of English. This result corresponds well with Tornberg’s opinion that pupils who study a foreign language usually think that it is important to learn how to speak the target language (Tornberg 1997:45). In the personal comments many pupils clarify their opinion by referring to the future in one way or another. For example one of the pupils writes:

“If you are good at speaking English you will get along well abroad. To be able to communicate with other people in other countries is very important.”
Another pupil writes:

“I think speaking is the most important part since that is probably what I will use the most as an adult.”

These answers from the pupils show that they are able to reflect on the fact that what they learn in school should be used outside the classroom in real situations. This contradicts Tornberg’s experience that pupils tend to associate language teaching only to what they practice in the language classroom (Tornberg 1997:17).

**Table 4. What do you think about speaking English in the lessons?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not like it at all</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not like it</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like it</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like it a lot</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result shows that the majority of the pupils are positive towards speaking English during the lessons. 78% of the pupils answer that they “like it” or “like it a lot”. Only 7% of the pupils say that they “don’t like it at all”. These numbers can be compared to the fact that 72% of the pupils say that they are “good” or “very good” at English and that 8% of the pupils answer that they are “not good at all” at English in Table 2. One of the pupils who really likes to speak English in the lessons motivates this by writing:

“It is fun and rewarding if you just learn to dare to speak English in the classroom.”

Another pupil who does not like to speak English in the English foreign language classroom motivates this opinion by writing:

“It feels unnecessary to speak English with people who know Swedish.”

The last quote is in accord with Ur’s (and others’) view about how important it is that the teaching of a foreign language has a meaningful purpose. According to Ur the pupils in a
foreign language classroom many times lack a real reason to talk to each other and because of this they tend to view the language classroom as artificial (Ur 2005:5-6).

### Table 5. How active are you when you communicate orally in...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not so active</th>
<th>Quite active</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very active</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...your class?</td>
<td>N = 21</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 8</td>
<td>N = 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 25</td>
<td>% = 32</td>
<td>% = 34</td>
<td>% = 9</td>
<td>% = 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…small groups?</td>
<td>N = 3</td>
<td>N = 19</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
<td>N = 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 4</td>
<td>% = 22</td>
<td>% = 39</td>
<td>% = 35</td>
<td>% = 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… pairs?</td>
<td>N = 2</td>
<td>N = 3</td>
<td>N = 34</td>
<td>N = 46</td>
<td>N = 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 2</td>
<td>% = 4</td>
<td>% = 40</td>
<td>% = 54</td>
<td>% = 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result clearly emphasizes the fact that the size of the group is of great importance when teaching oral communication in the English foreign language classroom. 25% of the pupils answer that they are not very active in the whole class, which can be compared to the fact that 54% of the pupils say that they are “very active” when oral communication is being practiced in pairs. Furthermore the opinion about the size of the group and the fact that it matters to the pupils is also expressed in a personal comment (related to Question 4) from a pupil who explains that:

“It depends on what we talk about and the size of the group, I really do not like to discuss things in English if the whole class is listening.”

However it is necessary to point out that this result does not only reflect the pupils’ willingness to speak in the English lessons. Obviously the potential amount of speaking time for each pupil is much smaller in whole-class discussions than in group or pair work.

### Table 6. What factors affect how active you are when you practice oral communication in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Does not affect me at all</th>
<th>Affects me</th>
<th>Affects me a lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pupils in my group</td>
<td>N = 17</td>
<td>N = 47</td>
<td>N = 21</td>
<td>N = 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 20</td>
<td>% = 55</td>
<td>% = 25</td>
<td>% = 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result shows that self-esteem is important when practicing oral communication in a foreign language. 42% of the pupils answer that the factor that affects them the most in the English foreign language classroom is if they feel confident. 26% of the pupils answer that they are affected a lot by the size of the group and 25% answer they are affected a lot by what pupils are in their group. These results agree with Krashen’s *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, where Krashen claims that foreign language acquisition will happen “in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent” (Brown 2000: 279). The opinion about the importance of feeling safe in the classroom is also reflected in the pupils’ answers that the size of the group affects 62% of them.

Another factor that according to the result of the questionnaire affects 60% of the pupils is interesting topics. This result again stresses how important it is for pupils to feel personally involved in the classroom. What the pupils seem to be the least concerned about is the fact that they know all the right words when communicating in English. As much as 38% of the pupils say that this does not affect them at all.

### Table 7. What should the teacher do for you to speak more English in the lessons?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use fun assignments</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let us talk in small groups</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be enthusiastic and encouraging  20
Use topics which are interesting to me  18
Ask me more questions  10
Blank answers  24
Other answers  7

22 pupils answer that they think the teacher should let pupils practice oral communication through fun assignments. Games where the pupils have to use their English and role-playing are examples of activities that the pupils suggest in class. 20 pupils mention that they think it is important that the teacher lets the pupils practice oral communication in small groups. 20 pupils answer that it is important that the teacher is enthusiastic and encouraging. One pupil explains this by writing:

“A good English teacher should encourage us and spread happiness in the classroom so that you want to and dare to speak.”

Another pupil claims:

“I think the teacher should let us talk more about things that we are interested in, if I do not find the topic interesting I don’t bother to speak.”

As many as 24 pupils did not answer this question at all. 7 of the answers are not of interest for my essay since they answer things like “I have no idea” or “nothing”.

### Table 8a. How often do you practice oral communication in the English lessons?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not so often</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70% of the pupils believe that they practice oral communication “often” or “very often” in the English lessons. 8% of the pupils answer “not so often”.

27
Table 8b. Is it often enough in your opinion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the pupils, 65%, think that oral communication is being practiced enough in the teaching of English. It is interesting to relate the fact that 35% of the pupils want to practice oral communication more in the classroom to the fact that the teachers point out that it is difficult to get many of the pupils to speak.

Table 9. For what reasons can it be a good idea to practice oral communication in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I learn how to speak English fluently</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I become more motivated to learn English</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn English from listening to my classmates</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I become more self-confident</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will need it in the future</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main reason which 51 of the pupils mention as an answer to why oral communication should be practiced in the English foreign language classroom is the fact that they learn how to speak fluently. 30 pupils answer that they become more motivated in the English foreign language classroom when oral communication is being practiced. One pupil explains this by writing:

“You become more motivated to learn English if you get to speak a lot and use the language yourself.”

28 pupils mention that they think it is good to practice oral communication since they believe that they learn the most from talking to each other. One pupil writes:
“That is how you learn, by listening and talking to others, and not just sitting there reading a text by yourself.”

Another pupil motivates the answer by writing:

“Speaking to others is important and fun. You learn from listening to how other people talk and pronounce words. It inspires you.”

These opinions can be related to Brumfit’s ideas about pupils developing fluency from experimenting with the language systems that they have created and the fact that pupils who are learning a foreign language should be given many opportunities to use the language themselves (Johnson & Morrow 1986:48). The pupils’ opinions can also be related to the positive attitude a majority of the pupils have towards English in Table 1 and the fact that a clear majority of the pupils say that they think that they are good at English in Table 2. The results of these two tables could be considered to be positive factors in terms of motivation to learn a language.

5. Conclusion

The overall aim of this essay was to investigate what attitudes English teachers and pupils in 9th grade in Sweden have towards oral communication in the teaching of English. I wanted to find out why they believe that oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English and what factors they believe contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom. I also wanted to know what English teachers think of the assessment of pupils’ ability to communicate orally in English. For my investigation I have interviewed three English teachers, and 85 pupils in 9th grade have answered a questionnaire.

The results show that the teachers and the majority of the pupils believe that oral communication is an important part of the teaching of English as a foreign language. The teachers think that practicing oral communication is important because through this the pupils get to use the target language a lot themselves. All the teachers believe that the pupils improve their skills of English from listening and talking to others. Being able to express yourself orally in English is of great importance in our society today. The teachers also think that it is important to practice oral communication since this should be a part of the pupils’ English education according to the Swedish curricular documents.
The teachers believe that factors like pupils’ self-esteem, a safe classroom climate, enthusiastic and encouraging teachers, meaningful assignments, small groups and motivation among the pupils contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom.

Furthermore the teachers think that the assessment of the pupils’ ability to express themselves orally in English is hard. In fact they think it is harder than anything else they assess in the English foreign language classroom. One reason is lack of time and another is the fact that the assessment of oral communication is not as concrete as other assignments. They also agree that the assessment is hard because of the problem of getting all pupils, especially shy ones, to participate in oral assignments in English.

The pupils who participated in this investigation think oral communication is an important part of their English education because through this they learn how to speak English fluently, something which they think they will need in the future. They also believe that they learn from each other when practicing oral communication and that this is motivating.

The pupils believe that pupils’ self-esteem, a safe classroom climate, small groups, group-members, interesting topics, fun assignments and enthusiastic and encouraging teachers are important factors which contribute to orally active pupils in the English foreign language classroom.

Many of my results of teachers and pupils’ attitudes towards oral communication in the teaching of English as a foreign language confirm what I have read in the literature. Furthermore it was not surprising to see that the English teachers who participated in this investigation agreed on so much in their answers. The fact that the teachers have such similar backgrounds might have influenced the results. The results may have been different if I had interviewed a more heterogeneous group of teachers.

It was a good idea to interview the teachers since I wanted to get access to their attitudes. Even though it was harder than expected to follow up the answers from my interviewees with additional questions I am pleased with the result of the interviews. My impression is that the teachers were honest and quite open-hearted when answering my questions. Perhaps it would have been better if I had interviewed a few pupils as well. Many pupils did not answer the open questions and fewer pupils than I had expected wrote a complementary comment. By interviewing some pupils I would have been able to explain the questions more and the pupils might have been able to reflect more before answering the questions.

I chose to limit my investigation of pupils’ attitudes to three classes of pupils in 9th grade. It would also have been interesting to compare the pupils’ answers in relation to their age, gender or school performance. I further chose to limit my investigation of teachers’ attitudes
to interviewing three female English teachers who have been working as upper-secondary-level language teachers for about six-seven years. It would also have been interesting to interview English teachers who differ a great deal from each other in terms of age, working experience or type of school where they teach. Another interesting area of study could be classroom observations of oral communication activities or to investigate what attitudes English teachers and pupils in Sweden have towards practicing oral or spoken-like written communication in English via the Internet.
6. References


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Swedish National Agency for Education. The syllabus for English, compulsory school. [online] Available at:

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide in Swedish

1. Av vilka anledningar bör engelsklärare låta eleverna öva på att kommunicera muntlig på engelska i år 9?

2. På vilka sätt får dina elever öva på att kommunicera muntligt på engelska?

3. Vilka fördelar ser du med ditt arbete med muntlig kommunikation i engelskundervisningen?

4. Vilka negativa aspekter finns?

5. Hur mycket tid av din engelskundervisning ägnar du uppskattningsvis åt att öva muntlig kommunikation? Är det tillräckligt tycker du?

6. Vad bedömer du i elevernas förmåga att kommunicera muntligt på engelska?

7. Vad tycker du om din uppgift att bedöma elevernas förmåga att kommunicera muntligt på engelska?

   a) Vad tycker du om bedömningen av elevernas muntliga förmåga jämfört med andra färdigheter som du bedömer i klassrummet?

   b) Hur resonerar du i din betygsättning av duktiga men blyga elever?

8. Hur pass viktigt tycker du det är att eleverna kan kommunicera muntligt för betyget i engelska?

9. Vad tror du att dina elever tycker om att öva muntlig kommunikation på engelskolektionerna?

10. Vilka faktorer tror du påverkar hur pass mycket en elev deltar muntligt i engelskundervisningen?

11. Vad krävs för att lyckas få eleverna att delta aktivt i den muntliga delen av engelskundervisningen?

   a) Vad krävs av eleven?

   b) Vad krävs av dig som pedagog?

12. Hur skulle du vilja arbeta med muntlig kommunikation i din engelskundervisning framöver?
Appendix 2: Interview guide in English

1. For what reasons should English teachers let pupils in 9th grade practice oral communication in English?

2. In what ways do you let your pupils practice oral communication in English?

3. What advantages do you see with practicing oral communication in your teaching of English?

4. What negative aspects are there?

5. How much time of your teaching of English do you spend on practicing oral communication? Is it enough in your opinion?

6. What do you assess in the pupils’ ability to communicate orally in English?

7. What do you think about assessing the pupils’ ability to communicate orally in English?
   a) What do you think about the assessment of the pupils’ oral ability compared to other skills that you assess in the classroom?
   b) How do you reason about your assessment of skilled but shy pupils?

8. How important is the pupils’ ability to communicate orally for the grade in English in your opinion?

9. What do you think your pupils think of practicing oral communication in the English lessons?

10. What factors do you think influence how much a pupil participates orally in the teaching of English?

11. What is required in order to succeed in getting the pupils to participate actively in the oral part of the teaching of English?
   a) What is required of the pupil?
   b) What is required of you as a pedagogue?

12. How would you like to work with oral communication in your teaching of English in the future?
Appendix 3: Questionnaire in Swedish

1. Tycker du det är roligt med engelska?
   Inte så roligt  Ganska roligt  Roligt  Mycket roligt

2. Är du bra på engelska?
   Inte så bra  Ganska bra  Bra  Mycket bra

3. Vad tycker du är viktigast att kunna på engelska? (Rangordna med 1,2, och 3)
   Läsa__  Prata__  Skriva__
   Motivering:
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. Vad tycker du om att prata engelska på lektionerna?
   Tycker inte alls om det  Tycker inte om det  Tycker om det  Tycker mycket om det
   Motivera:
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
5. Hur aktiv är du muntligt när ni diskuterar…

a) …i helklass?
Inte så aktiv    Ganska aktiv    Aktiv    Mycket aktiv

b) …i liten grupp?
Inte så aktiv    Ganska aktiv    Aktiv    Mycket aktiv

c) …parvis
Inte så aktiv    Ganska aktiv    Aktiv    Mycket aktiv

6. Vad är det som påverkar hur aktivt du deltar i diskussioner eller samtal på engelska?

a) Vilka som är i min grupp
Påverkar mig inte alls    Påverkar mig en del    Påverkar mig mycket

b) Om det vi ska prata om intresserar mig
Påverkar mig inte alls    Påverkar mig en del    Påverkar mig mycket

c) Om läraren är närvarande
Påverkar mig inte alls    Påverkar mig en del    Påverkar mig mycket

d) Att jag känner mig trygg i klassrummet
Påverkar mig inte alls    Påverkar mig en del    Påverkar mig mycket

e) Att läraren betygsätter mig
Påverkar mig inte alls    Påverkar mig en del    Påverkar mig mycket

f) Att jag inte vet vad allt heter på engelska

37
Påverkar mig inte alls  Påverkar mig en del  Påverkar mig mycket

g) Gruppens storlek, om vi pratar i helklass, halvklass eller i mindre grupper
Påverkar mig inte alls  Påverkar mig en del  Påverkar mig mycket

7. Vad ska läraren göra för att du ska prata ännu mer engelska på lektionerna?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

8a. Hur ofta får ni träna på att prata engelska på lektionerna?
Inte så ofta  Ganska ofta  Ofta  Mycket ofta

8b. Är det tillräckligt tycker du?
Ja  Nej

9. Av vilka anledningar kan det vara bra att öva på att diskutera/samtala med andra på engelska?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

10. Hur ska läraren betygsätta duktiga men blyga elever i engelska?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

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Appendix 4: Questionnaire in English

1. Do you think English is fun?
   Not fun at all   Quite fun    Fun    Very fun

2. Are you good at English?
   Not good at all   Quite good    Good    Very good

3. What do you think is the most important skill of English? (Rank with 1,2 and 3)
   Reading__   Speaking__   Writing__
   Motivate: _____________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

4. What do you think about speaking English in the lessons?
   Do not like it at all   Do not like it    Like it    Like it a lot
   Motivate:_________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

5. How active are you orally when you communicate orally in…
   a) … your class?
      Not so active   Quite active    Active    Very active
   b) … small groups?
      Not so active   Quite active    Active    Very active
   c) …pairs?
      Not so active   Quite active    Active    Very active
6. What factors affect how active you are when you practice oral communication in English?
   a) What pupils are in my group
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   b) If the topic is interesting
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   c) If the teacher is present
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   d) If I feel confident in the classroom
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   e) If the teacher assesses me
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   f) If I do not know all the words in English
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

   g) The size of the group, if we talk in the whole class, half the class or smaller groups
      Does not affect me at all      Affects me      Affects me a lot

7. What should the teacher do for you to speak more English in the lessons?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

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8a. How often do you practice oral communication in the English lessons?
Not so often  Quite often  Often  Very often

8b. Is it often enough in your opinion?
Yes  No

9. For what reasons can it be a good idea to practice oral communication in English?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

10. How should the English teacher assess skilled but shy pupils?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________