Linnæus University
School of Language and Literature

The use of ICT in the teaching of English Grammar

The views and experiences of six teachers of English in Sweden

Alfrida Arnell

Abstract

This study looks at how six teachers work with English grammar with and without the use of ICT. The aim is to investigate how teachers use ICT in English grammar and compare it with a more traditional approach. The primary source of the case study is interviews conducted with five secondary teachers and one primary teacher in southern Sweden. The teachers work in three different schools with different approaches to ICT. One school has been using ICT for three years, the second school has recently started using it and the third school does not use ICT in English grammar teaching at all. The teachers' experiences and thoughts on grammar teaching and on ICT are presented and discussed. The results show that only one of the teachers has a sound understanding of how to integrate ICT in English grammar teaching. All interviewed teachers are positive towards the use of ICT but most of them are not aware of the resources available or how to organise the teaching to make use of ICT in the best way. More and more Swedish schools provide laptops for all their pupils but it is clear that the teachers need more training to use ICT in English grammar teaching successfully.

Keywords: computers, English, traditional grammar teaching, ICT, language, Swedish secondary school, teaching

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1 Introduction

The term ICT means Information Communications Technology, and it is often used to talk about computers and other technology use in schools. There are many ways to involve ICT in language teaching and this study deals with how to use ICT within the teaching of English grammar. Grammar has been taught in various ways throughout the history of language learning. In the 19th century grammar was the most important part of learning a foreign language, while during the 1980s grammar was not supposed to be taught at all (Tornberg 2007:103-104). Nowadays most people agree that some grammar might benefit the pupils, but how it is to be taught is still a controversial issue.

The interest to involve computers in teaching was awakened in the 1970s and has since then grown. Kenning (2007:105) suggests that two of the major advantages of ICT are that it helps learners to gain control of their own learning and that it can help teachers individualise teaching.

The Swedish Agency for Education, henceforth referred to as Skolverket, write in their publication Education and Learning (Olson & Gustavsson 2011:75) that many Swedish pupils already have access to laptops. In the summer of 2011 there were approximately 150 schools that had provided computers for all of their pupils. Most of these schools were secondary or upper secondary schools. This study focuses on three secondary schools in southern Sweden where one has used ICT for three years, the second is on its first year and the third school does not use ICT to teach English grammar at all.

When Skolverket did a research about IT use in schools in 2009, the results were not satisfactory. Many schools lacked a strategy for how to work with ICT and only a fourth of the teachers were using ICT in their teaching. The most important way to involve the computer more in the teaching was said to be the interest, capability and motivation of the teacher (Jämterud 2010:13). Because teachers are so important for the successful integration of ICT in teaching, this study deals with the experiences and opinions of six English teachers; two of them use ICT in their teaching of English grammar, two have recently started to use it and two have not used it at all.

The author of this study chose to investigate ICT and grammar teaching to learn more about how to use the computer in the teaching of grammar.

1.1 Aim, research questions and scope

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how English grammar can be taught with ICT and compare it with traditional ways of teaching grammar, such as printed books and exercises. Possible advantages and disadvantages of the two different approaches will be looked at by comparing the experiences of six teachers of English working in three secondary schools in southern Sweden.

The following research questions have been formulated:

1. How is English grammar taught in the three schools?
2. What are the advantages of ICT in English grammar teaching compared to printed teaching materials?
3. What are the disadvantages of ICT in English grammar teaching compared to printed teaching materials?
4. What are the advantages of traditional grammar teaching?
5. What are the disadvantages of traditional grammar teaching?
6. What are the teachers' views on and experiences of the use of ICT in English grammar teaching?
7. What are the teacher's views on and experiences of the use of traditional grammar teaching?

This study does not claim to represent the views and experiences of all Swedish schools, rather it is a case study of how three individual schools and their teachers of English have chosen to work with grammar in different ways.

2 Material and Method

2.1 Material

This thesis is built on interviews with six English teachers to understand their views on grammar teaching with and without the help of ICT. Five out of the six teachers work in three different secondary schools in middle sized communities in the southern part of Sweden. The sixth teacher has several years of experience of working with ICT, but teaches in primary school. Her colleague who teaches in secondary school recommended the author of this study to interview this teacher. The three schools are located in different municipalities in southern Sweden and have been chosen due to personal contacts with teachers at two out of the three schools. The interviewed teachers are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Presentation of interviewees.

Name	Age	Teacher since	Subjects	Teaching grade	In school
Stina	47	1994	English & Swedish	5-9	1
Birgitta	58	1975	English & Social Sciences	1-4	1
Kerstin	62	1975	English & German	7-9	2
John	62	1973	English & Swedish	7-9	2
Anna	46	1991	English	6-9	3
Susanne	49	1995	English & Mathematics	6-9	3

To simplify the discussion of the collected data, the schools are referred to as school 1, 2 and 3, where school 1 is the school where ICT is used regularly, school 2 is where ICT is new and school 3 is where ICT is not used at all in grammar teaching. All names of the interviewees have been omitted and changed.

2.1.1 ICT access in the three schools

In school 1 there are clever boards in all classrooms and the teachers have their own laptop. The pupils in grade 4-9 each have a laptop and pupils in pre-school up until grade 3 have ten computers per class, which means that they have one computer for two pupils. School 2 has smart boards in half of the classrooms and all teachers have their own laptop. All pupils in grade 7 and grade 8 have their own laptop but not in grade 9. Instead pupils in grade 9 use stationary computers in a computer room. School 3 has no clever or smart boards in the classrooms. Each teacher has a computer at their desk and there are computer rooms for the pupils to use, there are also a couple of stationary computers in some of the classrooms.

2.2 Method

The six interviews were conducted at three different schools and in three different cities in southern Sweden. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes up to an hour depending to how much the interviewees had to say. They were conducted in Swedish, the mother tongue of all participants, to make sure that the interviews would flow smoothly and to make the participants feel comfortable and able to express themselves freely. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone and were later transcribed and used as the primary source for this case study. The questions varied slightly due to the fact that two of the teachers worked at a school that did not use ICT in English

grammar teaching and could therefore not answer questions concerning their experiences of ICT.

One important thing about school 1 is that they have organised their teaching a bit differently compared to the other two schools. School 1 has an aesthetic profile and there is a limited number of pupils in each class. Therefore pupils have to apply to the school, and this is unusual in Sweden. The teachers see themselves as mentors and the pupils are expected to be orally active at all times. The school works in an interdisciplinary manner and Stina has a close collaboration with the art teacher during all English classes. The school has no course books, except in mathematics, and the teachers are encouraged to bring in authentic material instead. The teachers of English at the school speak only English, also in primary school when the pupils first start to learn English.

2.3 Problems and limitations

School 1 has only one teacher of English at secondary level and this might affect the results. Birgitta teaches at primary school and thus has a different approach to her young pupils who have recently started learning English. Also, all teachers interviewed are older than 40. It would have been interesting to interview some younger teachers, but there are at the moment no young teachers of English at the schools in the study. Another limitation is that Kerstin and John do not actually work much with ICT in English grammar teaching. Due to lack of time to conduct new interviews their interviews are still discussed, but the thesis would have benefitted from interviews with teachers with more experience of working with ICT in English grammar teaching.

Even though all teachers were asked the same questions, except school 3 where the questions concerning ICT were left out, the answers were not always satisfactory. Sometimes the teachers started to talk about something else or answered another question. This makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions based upon their answers. Perhaps the teachers avoided some questions on purpose or they misunderstood the questions asked. Another problem is that the teachers in school 2 use very little or no ICT in English grammar teaching at all.

3 Theoretical background

This section deals briefly with the background of traditional grammar teaching, and explains the history of ICT and its role in the Swedish school. Furthermore it gives examples of how ICT can

be used in the language classroom and what technological aids can be used in the teaching of grammar.

3.1 Traditional grammar teaching

The term 'traditional grammar teaching' implies a focus on rules, patterns and grammatical forms. Traditional grammar teaching, although somewhat difficult to pinpoint, could be described as a 'focus on forms' instead of a 'focus on form'. 'Focus on forms' implies that the linguistic part of the language is emphasised. Forms, or structures, become more important than communication. In contrast, 'focus on form' purports to look at the meaning rather than to concentre on the structure of a language (Ellis et al 2002:420).

For many years different kinds of grammar instruction were seen as the only way to learn a second language. In traditional grammar teaching, learners produce language through drill-exercises (Lee & VanPattern 2003:139). Drill-exercises are exercises based on grammatical rules that usually can be solved without knowledge of the context or even the meaning of all the words in the sentence. Tornberg (2007:103-105) explains the grammar translation method as a method where the language is studied as a product, with no focus on communication at all. This method was common in the 1800s and later followed by many others, some more focused on grammar and some less. During the 1970s and 80s the communicative approaches took over, with Krashen at the forefront, at the expense of the grammatical approaches. However, grammar later regained some ground and today most people agree that some knowledge of language forms is necessary to acquire a foreign language (ibid).

3.2 ICT in the language classroom

ICT stands for Information Communications Technology. It is often referred to as only IT, but the C is added to underline the communicative aspect of the term. Computers should preferably be connected to a network to enable communication. Thus, an Internet connection would be needed for a computer to be included in the term ICT (Svensson 2008:12).

Computers were introduced in schools in the 1970s (Kenning 2007:105), and there has been a rapid technological development over the past 40 years. Computers are now a part of our everyday lives, but even so, many language teachers do not know how to integrate ICT in their teaching (Granath & Vannestål 2008:125).

In the book '*The Internet and the Language Classroom*' Dudeney (2007) explains the Internet for teachers who have not worked with ICT before. He gives many useful tips on how

to integrate ICT in language teaching, such as useful webpages and lesson plans. According to Dudeney, it is important to plan the lesson well and if working with the Internet, ensure that the webpage has existed for a longer period of time. It should preferably not be a personal homepage, but rather a professional one that is likely to stay the same for a longer period of time. Nevertheless, webpages change from time to time and as a teacher it is important to check all resources before class starts (Dudeney 2007:36). Furthermore, the teacher should be prepared for unexpected power cuts or technical problems of some other kind. The best way to prepare for this is to have a back-up plan (ibid). Not all material found on the Internet is safe or advisable for children or teenagers to use and it is the teacher's responsibility to check the material and webpages that are to be used, as well as to oversee the pupils during class. This can be done either by using a special kind of software that only accepts certain web pages or that checks if words used on the web page might not be suitable for younger pupils (Dudeney 2007:38). This could seem a bit drastic and a more profitable way is to make sure that the pupils know how to work with the Internet. Dudeney (2007:38) encourages teachers to talk with the pupils about working with the Internet so that they are prepared as they use the Internet in their free time with no teacher to supervise them. However, it can be questioned whether the pupils need to be taught how to work with the Internet. The pupils are often more used to the Internet than their teachers, and most teachers in Sweden would therefore not need to teach the pupils how to use the Internet.

Apart from working on computers in class there is the possibility to work with interactive whiteboards, sometimes called smart boards (Dudeney 2007:39). A smart board works as a traditional whiteboard but is also connected to the Internet, which makes it possible to project films or web pages directly on the board. Furthermore, the material on the board can be saved and printed (ibid). There is special teaching material created to be used on a smart board. It includes for instance interactive exercises where words or pieces of a sentence can be dragged around the board. Dudeney (2007:40) also identifies the smart board as a successful entry gate to introduce other types of technology in the classroom. Clever boards are a newer version of smart boards, and function in a similar way.

Dudeney (2007:115-140) continues to list various ways to use the Internet in language teaching, such as blogs, wikis, chats and pen-pals from other countries. There are several tips for teachers who want to interact with other language teachers who use ICT, for example to subscribe to a listserv for language teachers (Dudeney 2007:141). The listserv is free for anyone to subscribe to and a way to receive many suggestions on how to work with ICT. It is also a way to take part of interesting discussions with other teachers from all over the world.

There are furthermore groups and communities of various kinds that teachers can join to share experiences with one another. Another approach to use ICT is to use the Internet as a course book. The teacher then looks to find appropriate material and lesson plans on the Internet (Dudeney 2007:147-153).

When it comes to ICT and language learning, a common term used is CALL, which stands for Computer-Aided Language Learning. When CALL started, in the 1960s, most of its exercises were drill-exercises, but over the years CALL has come to include tasks of more communicative nature. ICALL (Intelligent CALL) is an attempt to create programs that adapt to the pupil. The program can be aware of the language components that a specific pupil needs to practice more (Svensson 2008:210). CALL-exercises usually mean tasks where the computer is the tutor and the pupils need to provide some kind of response, either by clicking, filling in a word or saying something into a microphone (ibid). Svensson (2008:210) discusses that there are speaking agents that the pupils can interact with on their computer. These agents can help pupils' pronunciation or correct their grammar. There are CALL exercises that let students practice grammar and these can be found on the Internet or on CD/DVD. Most common are webpages with different kinds of 'fill in the gap'-exercises. The user can choose what subject or grammatical feature s/he wants to practice and the correct answer will appear instantly, or as soon as all the exercises on the page are filled in (Svensson 2008:222-223). These pages usually do not remember the user. There are, however, other pages where the results are recorded and sometimes a teacher can correct and comment on for example texts produced by the student. There are furthermore games that let the pupil practice linguistic features such as word classes (Svensson 2008:225). Svensson (2008:228) also suggests that teachers can create grammar exercises or even let the pupils themselves create their own exercises on the Internet.

Another useful resource on the Internet is the many corpora available. There are different kinds of corpora, some are more general while others deal with comparisons between different languages, or are tailored for language teachers to analyse common mistakes made by students (Svensson 2008:229-230). At the time when Svensson wrote his book, corpora were mostly used in language classrooms to verify whether a phrase or term was correct or not (2008:234).

3.2.1 The advantages and disadvantages of ICT

Estling Vannestål (2009:17) lists several benefits of using ICT in the language classroom. First of all, ICT helps to create more variation in the classroom, which might lead to increased

motivation in the pupils and thus better conditions to learn the target language. What is more, the Internet is full of free of charge authentic and up-to-date material that language teachers can use in their teaching. Also, the Internet provides the opportunity for students from all over the world to interact with each other; this could be done through emails, online calls or in a chat room. Regardless of what the means of communication chosen, ICT is likely to help develop the understanding of other cultures in the pupils that participate. The use of ICT also gives the pupils an opportunity to write for others rather than only for their teacher or peers. If their production is posted on a blog, it has the potential to be read by a large audience, and this could help assure that the pupils put more effort into their work. Estling Vannestål (2009:18) furthermore states that ICT can help adapt the teaching to the individual level of the pupil. Pupils who achieve well can receive more advanced tasks while pupils who underachieve can benefit from work more suitable to their level. Also, pupils with learning disabilities can greatly benefit from the use of ICT. There are a great number of computer resources produced especially with such pupils in mind, for instance texts with an easier language or more images and colours.

There are some problems that might occur in language classrooms where ICT is implemented, and Estling Vannestål (2009:19) deals with some of these. The first hindrance listed is the lack of computers, or that the computers are old and slow. Secondly there is a lack of technical support in many schools, and then the fact that many teachers do not possess enough knowledge of working with ICT, in general or specifically in the teaching of English. The next problem could be that the pupils lack sufficient knowledge of computers, which might come as a surprise to some. The truth is that the young generation mostly uses the computer to play computer games and to chat with friends, but may not be as confident when it comes to writing e-mails or using a word processing program. Another hindrance could be that pupils use the computer for other things than school work. Then there might be a problem with pupils who copy material from the Internet and pupils who put more effort on the surface than the content of an assignment (Estling Vannestål 2009:19-22). It is reasonable to look at all these examples of things that could cause a problem, but the young generation uses the Internet in their spare time, and if the school does not teach them how to handle and process all the information they are bombarded with, then who will?

Jämterud (2010) claims that 'digital competence' is as important as being able to read, write and count. The European Union states that all citizens need digital competence, and that connotes inter alia to have knowledge of how ICT works, and to be able to use it both at work and at home. It is no longer a question *if* schools should teach digital competence, but rather

how? Digital competence should not be taught as a subject on its own, rather, to be successful, it should permeate all school subjects. Nowadays there are computers in almost every home and the schools need to teach its pupils how ICT can help the learning process (Jämterud 2010:8-11).

Olson & Gustavsson (2011) report that research made on how ICT affects the classroom shows both positive and negative results. It still seems unclear whether ICT helps the students' results or not, but studies both from the United States in 2005 and from Sweden in 2009 have shown that enthusiasm and motivation increase when pupils have their own computer. It also seems true that the working environment in the classroom becomes better when the pupils work with computers (Olson & Gustavsson 2011:76 in Utbildning & Lärande). More research is needed in this area, but the Internet is here to stay and its existence in the language classroom cannot be ignored. Our focus should instead be on looking at the potentials and possibilities of the Internet.

Kenning (2007:150) deals with the question of how ICT has influenced language learning and it seems not to have had much of an effect although ICT has been around for quite a while. She claims that most new technology has been implemented without much research on its benefits, mostly because of the rapid development of technology (ibid). Perhaps have we once again been too quick to take aboard new technology, without taking the time to investigate what the best resources are and how to use them effectively in the classroom.

3.2.2 ICT as an automat, a tool, an arena and a medium

Svensson (2008) defines four different ways in which ICT can be used in language teaching: ICT as an automat, ICT as a tool, ICT as an arena and ICT as a medium.

ICT as an automat means that the teacher can use the computer to arrange situations where some parts of the pupils' behaviour will be rewarded and others not. This goes back to Skinner, who in the 1960s created teaching machines to teach pupils to answer correctly. Skinner was one of the protagonists of behaviourism, which dominated the way learning was seen during the 1960s and 1970s (Lundgren et al 2010:142). Skinner did research on how animals could be conditioned to learn certain behaviour. He did this by re-enforcing certain behaviour, with a reward such as food. This was believed to work also for humans, who were given encouragement when they did something correctly. According to the behaviourists anyone could learn anything and this approach made its way into the school systems, especially evident in the teaching machines used in many schools (ibid). These machines took

the role of the teacher and gave the pupils the feedback that the teacher could not give, since the teacher did not have the possibility to give feedback to each pupil individually at all times. Skinner thought that when some parts of the pupils' behaviour were enhanced, they would learn to produce correct answers. Skinner's machines consisted of questions that were to be answered, for instance a sentence where one word was missing. The pupils then had to fill in the missing word and would immediately understand if the answer was correct or not (Svensson 2008:50-51). Even though teaching machines like this have not been used in many years, much grammar is still taught in a similar way. The computer can now take this role, which lets the teacher focus on other aspects of the teaching. There are many teachers and researchers that have reacted strongly against the use of the computer as an automat, since they claim this to be an outdated way of learning a language. However, pupils are not as negative towards it and seem to appreciate the fact that the computer can give immediate feedback (Estling Vannestål 2009:19).

Svensson (2008) also discusses ICT as a tool. This means that ICT is used to facilitate communication with teachers, other pupils and people outside a particular school setting. The pupils can access the desired information by using the Internet. The computer can in this sense be seen as a tool without limits and something that can be developed ad infinitum, much more flexibly than older tools such as the dictionary, the library and the note pad, since the computer contains them all and much more. ICT as an arena refers to the fact that technology now is an integral part of our lives and we live parts of our lives online, through the communication and experiences we have on the Internet (Svensson 2008:54-55). Svensson continues to discuss ICT as a medium, where administrative data and information are distributed. He gives as an example teachers who publish course information online, such as schedules, tasks and results (Svensson 2008:56).

3.2.3 ICT usage in Swedish schools

According to Jedeskog (2005:28) it was in 1984 that the Swedish Government made the decision to introduce computers in Swedish schools. Between 1988 and 1991 schools all over the country were involved in a project to integrate "computers as pedagogical tools" (Jedeskog 2005:28). The project was financed by the government. The computer was used as a tool to write texts during this period, often in the subject Swedish. In 1994 the government founded a project to encourage the use of ICT in schools, and this time it also involved some teacher training. Although the project was relatively large it did not nearly cover all Swedish schools and not all parts of the country took part in the project. The next project took place

from 1999 to 2002 and was called ITiS which means 'IT in School' [IT i Skolan]. All Swedish municipalities were invited to join ITiS and perhaps as many as half of Sweden's teachers received training in how to work with ICT (Jedeskog 2005:30).

Many Swedish pupils already have access to laptops (Olsson & Gustavsson 2011:75 in Utbildning & Lärande). Skolverket states that all pupils should be able to "use modern technology as a tool to search for knowledge, for communication, to create and to learn" [author's translation] after secondary school. Skolverket also states that Swedish pupils in secondary school in their English teaching should gain knowledge of different texts and oral samples from the Internet and other media (Skolverket [www]).

According to a study by Estling Vannestål and Maricic from 2008, English teachers in Sweden have not changed much of their teaching since ICT entered the stage. The computer is used to find electronic dictionaries, find facts and use word processing programs (Granath et al 2008:130). In other words it is the same thing only in a different medium. The study also shows that few teachers use the computers to communicate with other parts of the world in the target language. This study is now four years old, and even though there might have been an increased ICT use it is dubious that the situation looks different in 2012.

4 Results

This section presents the results of the six interviews. Each school is dealt with separately and so is each interview question.

4.1 School 1

4.1.1 Traditional grammar teaching

What is a good way to teach grammar?

Stina talks about grammar in two different ways, where one way is grammar as a subject and the other is to use grammar in practice. She does not see a need to emphasise grammar too much, at least not in secondary school since she thinks the pupils are too young to understand the abstract thinking needed in grammar. She compares grammar with mathematics, where pupils can use their logic and see patterns, and explains that she thinks it is good if they can talk about grammar. Birgitta agrees with Stina that the best way to learn grammar is when the pupils see the pattern themselves.

All teachers answer this question similarly to Stina and Birgitta. They give examples of how they teach themselves, but have little idea of the actual methods behind their way of teaching. This is perhaps because they lack the proper language to talk about these things, or

because the question was not formulated clearly enough.

How do you teach grammar?

Stina teaches grammar as a subject on its own. She lets the pupils define the grammar and play with it, for instance by using different colours for different words or the pupils get to change the word order to see what happens to the sentence. She seldom explains English grammar in front of the whole class, at least not until some of the pupils have seen the pattern themselves and ask her about it. The pupils have to define how to use the language in a specific situation and if there is one specific grammatical item that she wants the pupils to notice, she uses this item a lot during a period of time. Stina says that the key to language learning is communication and being able to use the language. She thinks her teaching has changed to the better over the years. She used to teach in a more traditional way before "with rules and such things", but has left that way of teaching since she felt it did not work well. She noticed that the pupils did not understand how to use grammar in practice. Since Birgitta teaches in primary school she does not put much effort into grammar, but she gives one example of how she would ask the pupils if they understand why she says 'cats' instead of 'cat'. "It's more than one" is the answer she gets. She is therefore confident that they pick up the grammar they need along the way. However, it can happen that she brings in a work sheet with some grammatical item the pupils recently have discovered. Birgitta seldom corrects the way her pupils express themselves.

What are the advantages of teaching the way you do?

Stina says that she can see that her pupils are engaged since everyone needs to be involved when they have to think about it themselves. Birgitta says that she has never worked differently than what she does. She has no experience of how to work with a book, but thinks her way of working is fun.

Are there any disadvantages with your way of teaching?

One disadvantage Stina can think of is that she does not have control over what is going to happen during class, something that she sees as exciting. If she becomes unsure of how to answer a question she tells her pupils that she will look into it for next time. Another disadvantage could be if the pupils are new in the school. New pupils might find their approach a bit difficult in the beginning, since they need to be much more active orally than in many other schools. Birgitta reflects on the fact that her pupils seldom work with books or

hand-outs, and says that the pupils who love hand-outs might be a little dissatisfied with how they work in school 1.

4.1.2 ICT in the language classroom

Do you and your pupils have sufficient access to computers and the Internet?

Stina and Birgitta think that they have enough computers since both teachers and pupils have one computer each and the school has Wi-Fi that works in all the classrooms and buildings.

Do you use ICT in English grammar teaching?

Stina uses ICT in English grammar teaching regularly. Birgitta explains that the grade 4 she now teaches is the first class that has their own laptops, so this year it is easier to integrate the computer in her teaching.

For how long have you been using ICT in grammar teaching?

Stina has used ICT in grammar teaching for as long as she has had the opportunity to use computers. She started to work with ICT when she worked in another school. She was introduced to ICT through the ITiS project that took place from 1999 until 2002. Birgitta has used the clever board in her classroom for at least three years, while her pupils have had their computers for only one year.

How often do you use ICT in grammar teaching?

Stina uses the computer as often as she can and works with the clever board on a daily basis. She uses ICT in grammar teaching whenever she has a grammar class. Birgitta does not let the pupils work on their computers all the time, rather she lets them work with them on certain projects, such as using Keynote to make presentations about themselves. The youngest ones do not use computers at all yet, since they have not had access to their logins, but that will soon change and they will be allowed to play letter games on the computer.

What kind of resources do you then use?

Stina uses the clever board in the classroom. As an example she explains how she works with the learning platform Moodle. She and another teacher had the students make films that explained grammatical features and Stina plans to do this again. The pupils record these films with their mobile phones, or they can choose to take photos, and edit in their lap-tops. Stina

lists programs such as Keynote to do presentations and says that her pupils have worked with digital stories. Her idea is that if the pupils explain the grammar themselves they learn better than if they would hear the explanation from someone else. Stina also uses Moodle in each grammar class. She lets her pupils write down their reflections on what they have learnt during class and send it to her. She also encourages them to ask her questions. All this is done via Moodle. This way she sees what the pupils have learnt and what they still need to understand. Stina sometimes lets the pupils work at home with grammar tasks she finds on the Internet, as long as they are interactive. Her experience is that such exercises are difficult to find, and therefore she constructs her own exercises that she uploads on Moodle. Stina sees no point in letting the pupils work with exercises on the Internet during class since their teacher is present, a great resource for the pupils to ask questions about grammar or to discuss things with. Stina says that exercises on the Internet could be good for those pupils who want to go deeper, or want some practice, but she prefers to use films, digital stories or radio programs. Birgitta talks about a recent project where the pupils worked with presentations about themselves and they used their computers to do so. Occasionally the pupils are allowed use the computers to play language games, such as word games.

Are there enough resources for you to use?

Stina does not think there are enough resources, and therefore creates her own material for the pupils to use. Birgitta does not think this question is relevant for her, since she works with younger pupils and mostly creates her own materials.

What is the difference between using ICT and course books?

School 1 does not use printed teaching materials at all but Stina says that she has a copy of a teaching material called Wings that she sometimes looks in to get some ideas, mostly in the teacher's instruction. The school has not bought any new books since the new syllabus came in the autumn of 2011. Stina is more confident in how to create her own material now than some years ago, and therefore sees less need to use a book. She has looked at digital teaching materials, but is critical of it. Stina thinks the digital book is the same thing with the only difference that it is now in the computer. She would rather want something more flexible, where "the opportunities of ICT are used". By that she means a material that can be used in more than one way, where you can pick and choose out of a wide range of material. Birgitta has never used a book to teach grammar and thus has no experience of that way of teaching.

Do you think one way is better than the other?

Stina does not answer this question, but it can be supposed that she thinks ICT is better since she does not use course books at all in her teaching. She has a copy of the course book Wings, but seldom uses it and only as a reference to see how the authors interpret the syllabus. She underlines the importance of flexibility, something that she has when she creates her own material rather than using the printed teaching material.

Do you feel secure in how to carry out the teaching with the help of ICT?

Stina says she feels secure, she only wishes she had more time to construct tasks and put everything together. Birgitta would like to be better at how to work with the clever board, but says they will take some kind of a course later this year. She refers to Stina as a teacher who knows a lot about how to work with ICT, and someone she can ask when she needs help. Birgitta says that she sometimes feels helpless when neither she nor the pupils know how to solve a problem.

Do you find that ICT is an aid in your teaching? Why/why not?

Stina thinks ICT is an aid in her teaching because it allows her to be flexible and create her own material. Birgitta thinks ICT is a great way to reach the pupils. She calls the computer "their tool much more than mine" and says that the pupils teach her new things all the time. It is an aid because the pupils want to learn more when they work with ICT, and it provides an opportunity to get outside the classroom walls, so that the pupils can understand that English is a world language.

Have the students' results been affected by the use of ICT in grammar teaching? If so, in what way?

Stina cannot say whether the students' grammar results have been affected specifically by grammar teaching with ICT, but the results of the school as a whole are getting better and better each year. She refers to some ranking of schools in Sweden where her school has more of the highest grades than what is average in Sweden. She also refers to the new syllabus and says that the way they are conducting their teaching is well aligned to what the syllabus requires. To illustrate this she mentions the language portfolio that they work with and that the school focuses a lot on oral communication. Stina says her pupils normally achieve well on the annual National Tests in English. Birgitta does not know if the pupils' results are better, but says the reason to why the municipality has invested in all these computers for the pupils,

is to help the results. Birgitta thinks the results will be affected in a positive way since the children seem so happy and motivated to learn with the help of ICT.

Both Stina and Birgitta hope that the results will benefit from their teaching with the help of ICT, but only because the school's results as a whole are good, it is not certain that ICT helps the pupils' results in English grammar.

4.2 School 2

4.2.1 Traditional grammar teaching

What is a good way to teach grammar?

Kerstin says the best way to teach grammar is to give many examples so that the pupils can find the common denominator and define the grammatical rule. According to John, grammar consists of several features. Some features are more important to learn than others, for instance the irregular verbs.

How do you teach grammar?

Kerstin tries to teach grammar by giving the pupils many examples. John usually gives the pupils a diagnostic test before they start to work with something new grammarwise, so that he can see where each pupil is at. He then gives the pupils exercises that cover the parts of the grammar that they need to practice more. When the pupils have handed in a text he lets them choose how much he should correct, if they want him to correct only the basics or more in depth. He does this since he knows that not all pupils are interested in the higher grades, and if the underachieving pupils see all the mistakes they make it might discourage them so much that they do not want to try anew.

What are the advantages of teaching the way you do?

Kerstin underscores the importance of repetition but also to give different kinds of examples. Neither John nor Kerstin give satisfactory answers to this question.

Are there any disadvantages with your way of teaching?

John mentions that there are always some pupils who would like to work differently than how they work currently. Some like to work in a book with exercises and others do not like that at all and might prefer to read a text instead.

4.2.2 ICT in the language classroom

Do you and your pupils have sufficient access to computers and the Internet?

Kerstin and John find the pupils' access to computers and Internet satisfactory in grade 7 and 8. Grade 9 has not been given laptops and is dependent on stationary computers in a computer room. All teachers have their own laptops.

Do you use ICT in grammar teaching?

Kerstin says that ICT is still relatively new but says she uses ICT for grammar exercises. John has used a web-based teaching material called Connect, but apart from that he has not used ICT much in English grammar teaching. Earlier the school had a computer-based program called 'Grammar in action' that for some reason they do not have anymore.

For how long have you been using ICT in grammar teaching?

Kerstin says that the smart boards came last year and the computers three months ago. It can be assumed that Kerstin has used ICT for the same period of time.

How often do you use ICT in grammar teaching?

Kerstin says she does not use smart boards much at the moment, because most of the classrooms where she teaches do not have smart boards. John does not often use ICT in grammar teaching.

What kind of resources do you then use?

Kerstin says she uses the smart board to show clips from You Tube or BBC where another teacher explains grammar. In grade 8 they have had a free online version of their teaching material called Happy, and Kerstin and her colleagues soon need to decide whether they want to prolong it. The pupils use their computers mostly to write on or use them to search for information. There is also a blog for each class where the teachers can post information about each subject, for instance what the pupils will be doing lesson by lesson and what their homework is. In English the pupils will post a short text that they have written during class. John uses the smart board sometimes.

Are there enough resources for you to use?

Kerstin would like to see more interactive tasks that could help with oral skills, and suggests

that someone should invent a program where one could talk to a computer.

These kinds of programs are already invented, but Kerstin has not received any information about them. Neither does she seem interested in adjusting her teaching to align with ICT, which might be understandable considering her age and the few years remaining until her retirement.

What is the difference between using ICT and course books?

Kerstin thinks ICT is less interactive and says that it often leads to the pupils writing more. John says the advantage of using a web-based book is that the pupils can listen to the texts at home.

Do you think one way is better than the other?

Kerstin thinks a mixture of the two is the best, since she believes it to be boring to only work with computers. She says it is nice to sometimes have a real book to work with. She thinks one advantage of ICT is their blog, because when the pupils are sick, they can check the blog to see what they have missed during class. Overall she thinks it is too early to say anything about whether course books or ICT is better. John thinks ICT has some advantages and some disadvantages. He says the computer is helpful if it is used in a good way, but if the pupils are on Internet pages that they are not supposed to, it can be a problem. According to John there are also some programs that are good and some that are not. John would like to see programs where whole texts were on the computer, and that these programs also did spell checks. John adds that the computer is an aid for the pupils who have writing disabilities. John talks about smart boards as something with many disadvantages. He thinks it takes too long to start them and finds it more difficult to write neatly on a smart board than on a white board.

Do you feel secure in how to carry out the teaching with the help of ICT?

Kerstin does not feel secure in how to carry out her teaching with ICT, but says she learns new things all the time. Kerstin feels insecure about what to do when the computers do not work, are discharged or if there is a power outage. John says he is learning how to better work with ICT.

Do you find ICT is an aid in your teaching? Why/why not?

Even though Kerstin says she does not feel secure in how to carry out her teaching with the help of ICT, she still sees ICT as an aid in her teaching, mostly because it is fun with variety. But Kerstin says she now receives more student work sent by email to her to correct. She

misses the way she earlier could give the pupils feedback in class while they were writing. Now "it all happens in the computer" she says. John sees ICT as an aid sometimes, but not always. He gives typing on the computer as an example. For him it often takes longer to type something on the computer than it would have if he had written by hand. He thinks it is important that the computer does not become a purpose of its own. John thinks other teachers, more skilled in using ICT, might benefit more from it.

Have the students' results been affected by the use of ICT in grammar teaching? If so, in what way?

Kerstin hopes the students' results will be helped when they all have their own laptops. So far some pupils have difficulties because they are not used to writing on computers, and this slows them down. John has read some research about the use of ICT in school and according to them the results do not improve. He gives no examples of ICT and grammar teaching.

4.3 School 3

4.3.1 Traditional grammar teaching

What is a good way to teach grammar?

Anna thinks grammar should be taught in context whereas Susanne believes grammar should be taught in a traditional way. Susanne uses the term 'traditional grammar teaching' to explain how she emphasises grammatical rules and structures in the teaching.

How do you teach grammar?

Anna works quite closely with the book but also makes sure to bring in news articles from English newspapers. Anna puts less effort on grammar now than earlier, and explains grammatical items when they appear for instance in a text. Once in a while she gives a more traditional explanation in front of the whole class, but makes sure the pupils are active and participating. She refers to random hand-outs with drill-exercises as something that belongs to the past. Susanne on the other hand, believes that grammar is important and often gives explanations of the rules and patterns of the English language, something that she lacked when she went to school herself. After that she lets the pupils work with exercises during class and their homework is to learn the rule that was explained in class.

What are the advantages of teaching the way you do?

Anna says she trusts the authors of the teaching material, that they have done research and know the best method to teach languages. She therefore feels confident in using their material.

Susanne thinks the greatest advantage of her way of teaching is that the pupils get to see that there are grammatical rules that can help them to use the language correctly.

Are there any disadvantages with your way of teaching?
Anna sees no disadvantages with her way of teaching. She says she can "see the sparkle" in her pupils eyes, and the day she does not see that anymore, she will change her teaching. Susanne realises that the way she teaches grammar is a bit too abstract for some, especially the younger pupils, but she says pupils usually understand better in grade 8, except for the ones that do not listen or do not do their homework.

4.3.2 ICT in the language classroom

Even though the pupils in School 3 do not have as much access to computers as the other two schools, both Anna and Susanne discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ICT in grammar teaching. Anna says the grammar programs she has seen are not very interesting, and she calls them old-fashioned: a traditional hand-out in electronic form. The only advantage she can think of is that the computer can give instant feedback, but she fears that there would be less discussion about why a certain answer is correct if the pupils worked on computers. Anna underlines the importance of variation, and says that to work only with computers or only paper is not a solution in itself. The main reason that she does not use ICT is that the pupils do not have their own computers. If the school provided computers she would be happy to involve more ICT in her teaching, especially since it is an opportunity to make the teaching a bit more varied. Susanne agrees with Anna and says that the grammar exercises she has seen on the computer are the same as on paper. She is also very positive towards computers and would like for each pupil to have their own laptop.

5 Discussion

This section discusses the results presented in Section 4 guided by the research questions.

1.   How is grammar taught in the three schools?
School 1 focuses on the pupils' ability to think for themselves and as a school they often work with interdisciplinary projects. Stina has chosen to work with grammar as a subject on its own where the pupils experiment with the language to find patterns and explanations.

Susanne is the only one who talks about her way of teaching as traditional. Although Anna works closely with the book, she disaffiliates herself from the term 'traditional grammar teaching'. Stina and Anna are similar in that they both have left a more traditional way of teaching grammar and now work in ways that they both think function better. None of the

other teachers mention anything about changing their methods over the years. This does not necessarily mean they have not done so, but they do not talk about it in the interviews. Stina and Anna both talk about how they can see that their pupils like their way of teaching. Stina seems more independent than Anna, and creates much of her material herself, whereas Anna sticks to the teaching material. This could be one reason why Stina has come so far in integrating ICT in her teaching and agrees with what Jämterud (2010:13) discusses about the teacher's key role in involvement of ICT in the teaching. Stina is also the teacher that seems most eager to try new things and experiment with her teaching. She has understood that grammar can be too abstract for the pupils and has therefore chosen to work with it differently. Susanne has done the same observation, but has not changed her teaching because of it. Instead she thinks the pupils will catch up later, except those who do not do their homework.

School 1 uses the computer as a medium as well as an automat and a tool (Svensson 2008). The computer is both a way to communicate with the teacher through their learning platform Moodle as well as an automat where Birgitta's pupils can play games. It is also used as a tool when the pupils do presentations. School 2 uses it as an automat and a tool, but not yet as a medium. The computer is used to type on, do grammar exercises, watch film clips or search for information on the Internet. The blog is used to give information but not to interact. The interviewed teachers give no examples of ICT as an arena.

2.   *What are the advantages of ICT compared to printed teaching materials?*

One advantage of ICT that Birgitta mentions is that it is a tool that the young generation likes, which creates motivation in the pupils, something that also Estling Vannestål (2009) recognises. Stina sees ICT as a great resource to interact with her students. John and Kerstin have both used the online version of their teaching materials, and John thinks it is helpful that the students can listen to the texts at home. Kerstin thinks ICT is good because it creates variety. Variety is something most of the teachers come back to again and again. Estling Vannestål (2009:17) writes about this as she lists the benefits of ICT in the language classroom.

One very important point John makes is to make sure that ICT really becomes a step forward and not only the same but in a different format. This is why Stina does not like to work with web-based teaching materials. She thinks it is the same as printed teaching materials only in a different format. The teachers in this study all see that ICT has great potential, but how to use that potential in the most successful manner is still to be discovered.

Some of them have come further than others, but all ask for more and better resources. It now seems as if most teachers are quite isolated, even though they perhaps share some ideas with their colleagues at their own school. More useful tips would need to make their way between schools. However, the teachers need to have the time to sit down to share tips, ideas and lessons plans, and that is not always easily done. There are good books about ICT and language teaching, for example 'The Internet and the Language Classroom' by Dudeney (2007) or 'Lära engelska på internet' ['Learn English on the Internet'] by Estling Vannestål (2009) and they deserve to be read by all language teachers.

3.   What are the disadvantages of ICT compared to printed teaching materials?

Kerstin says ICT is less interactive than books and this indicates that she views the computer only as a tool to be used for typing or to search for information (Svensson 2008). Kerstin also mentions that some pupils type slowly since they are not yet used to it and John thinks that the computer is helpful as long as the pupils do what they are supposed to do with their computers. Kerstin seems to think that ICT increases her workload. She says she has more student work to correct now than before because the pupils all send their work to her more so than earlier. Whether ICT becomes an advantage or not depends on how a teacher organises the teaching. There are ways to facilitate the use of ICT, but neither John nor Kerstin seem to have the knowledge of how that could be done. Jämterud (2010:8-11) states that the school needs to teach the pupils how ICT can help their learning process, but that is not simple if the teachers themselves are not helped by it. Even though both Kerstin and John say that ICT is a help, they both seem insecure in how to integrate it, especially John who is critical towards smart boards because he thinks they take too long to start up. He says that the computer is the tool of the new generation. This can bring about a gap between the teachers and pupils because the teachers might not understand how the pupils learn best.

Estling Vannestål (2009:19) deals with possible problems that might occur in the language classroom where ICT is implemented, and several parallels can be drawn to the experiences of the teachers in this study. The first one is that the teachers are not familiar with computers themselves. This is definitely the case for Kerstin, John and partly also Birgitta, which probably can be explained by looking at their age. Stina is a bit younger, and this gives her an advantage. It is of course not always true that higher age equals less skills in how to work with ICT, but it cannot be ignored that younger persons often feel more comfortable working with computers, as well as learning new things in general.

*4.	What are the teachers' views on and experiences of the use of ICT in English grammar teaching?*

Even though both school 1 and 2 have sufficient access to computers and other technological aids, the response from the teachers are quite different. In school 1, the computer and ICT in general seem much more integrated in the teaching at all stages, and the teachers are also more secure. In school 2 on the other hand, there is confusion about how to integrate the computers in the already existing teaching. Kerstin and John do not seem to have fully embraced ICT, or rather they have not had the right resources or enough time to do so. Kenning (2007:150) highlights the discrepancy between research on technological benefits and the quickness with which ICT has been implemented in schools. Schools that provide laptops for all pupils might receive a better reputation or become more popular among pupils and parents, but what is the point of that if the pupils do not learn better? Kerstin and John have not changed much of their teaching since ICT entered the stage, just like the results of Estling Vannestål and Maricic from 2008 show. Both Kerstin and John are experienced teachers that have worked without ICT for many years. To force them to use technological aids that they do not control is perhaps not the best idea. The pupils are in school to learn, and an insecure teacher might not help them reach this goal.

Both school 2 and 3 are quite similar in the way they teach grammar, with the one difference that the pupils have laptops in one and not in the other. The teachers in school 2 seem confused about how to integrate computers in grammar teaching and there has been no information specifically for language teachers. Perhaps this is partly generational, younger teachers of English might be better at involving ICT in their teaching.

All teachers except Birgitta mention that they would like more or different resources. The biggest part of the problem is probably to find the time for it. There is no time to read books about how to integrate ICT in teaching, although such books exist. The grammar exercises the teachers have looked at on the Internet are only partly satisfactory and both Anna and Susanne mention that they are traditional, a positive word for Susanne but not for Anna.

*5.	What are the teacher's views on and experiences of the use of traditional grammar teaching?*

Susanne likes traditional grammar teaching while Anna does not like it at all. It is interesting to see that these two work at the same school. The way to teach grammar depends on what the teacher prefers. Susanne focuses more on forms while Anna focuses more on form, in other

words that the pupils would learn to communicate rather than to learn the linguistics features of the language (Ellis et al 2002:420). Stina has left a traditional way of teaching because she thinks it is too abstract for secondary school pupils.

6. What are the advantages of traditional grammar teaching?

Susanne thinks the advantage of traditional grammar teaching is that there are clear rules. When pupils learn to use these rules they increase their chances to speak or write correctly. Birgitta talks about how some pupils enjoy writing in books and doing exercises, and so does John. The three teachers agree with Tornberg (2007:103-105) who claims that some knowledge of grammar is necessary to acquire a second language. There might be some pupils that think the way Stina teaches grammar is too free, or simply prefer to hear the explanations from someone else.

7. What are the disadvantages of traditional grammar teaching?

The greatest disadvantage of traditional grammar teaching is that pupils are not required to understand (Lee & VanPattern 2003:139). They can learn a rule by heart, but might not be able to use it in real life communication. Many exercises used in traditional grammar teaching are of the drill-type and there are not enough contexts for the pupils to draw their own conclusions about the language.

According to the interviewed teachers, the greatest disadvantage seems to be that there is not enough variation. All the teachers that were interviewed think that the great advantage of ICT is that it helps to give their teaching more variation. Thus, it can be supposed that the teaching is less varied without the use of ICT.

6 Conclusion

This study is based upon interviews with five teachers of English in Swedish secondary school as well as one teacher of English in Swedish primary school, and looks at how they view and experience working with ICT in English grammar teaching. The aim was to see how English grammar could be taught with ICT and to compare it with more traditional ways of teaching grammar. This aim has been reached partly since only one of the secondary teachers seemed to have a clear understanding of how to work with ICT in English grammar teaching (Stina), while one worked with it in primary school (Birgitta), and one used it sometimes in secondary school (Kerstin). The fourth teacher that was supposed to use it did in fact not use

it much at all (John), and the teachers that work in a school that has not provided laptops for their pupils use computers sometimes (Anna and Susanne). This made it difficult to fully reach the aim. There is also a vague concept of what grammar teaching is, and the teachers seem to have difficulties in separating grammar teaching from language teaching as a whole.

Even though ICT is becoming more common in Swedish schools, there is still a long way to go before it becomes a natural part of English grammar teaching. The teachers with many years of experience prefer to teach the way they are used to, and ICT is not necessarily an aid in that. It is important that the computer should not become a goal in itself, but that if ICT is to be used, it is well thought through and not only used out of duty or constraint. The teacher is the most important person in making sure ICT is implemented in the classroom, and the pupils need guidance in how to use it in their learning. The pupils might be used to the computers from chats and games, but to work with it in school is different, and they need help to understand how to use it (Estling Vannestål 2009:20-21). Not all teachers feel secure enough to offer the guidance needed and should therefore not be forced to use the computer. Instead, let them focus on being good teachers and encourage them to take in ICT when possible. It could be that grammar is not the best area to use ICT for. Insecure teachers are not inspiring role models for the young generation, even though the teachers can take advantage of the technical competence many pupils possess. What is more, there seems to be a great need for language teachers to receive more training in how to work with ICT in the language classroom, and one can hope that more such opportunities arise in the future. The technical development goes very fast and even though some schools are quick to take in new ideas it is important that the outcome is beneficial.

More investigation would be needed to make sure the conclusions in this thesis are valid also in other schools. However, the conclusions drawn in this study can be interesting to anyone who considers using ICT in grammar teaching.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions in school 1 and 2

Hur gammal är du?

How old are you?

Hur länge har du jobbat som lärare?

How long have you worked as a teacher?

Vilka ämnen undervisar du i?

What subjects do you teach?

Har du och dina elever tillräcklig åtkomst till datorer och internet?

Do you and your pupils have sufficient access to computers and the Internet?

Vad är ett bra sätt att lära ut grammatik?

What is a good way to teach grammar?

Hur lär du ut grammatik?

How do you teach grammar?

Vad finns det för fördelar med det?

What are the advantages of that?

Några nackdelar?

Any disadvantages?

Använder du IKT i grammatikundervisningen?

Do you use ICT in grammar teaching?

Hur länge har du använt IKT i grammatikundervisningen?

For how long have you been using ICT in grammar teaching?

Hur ofta använder du IKT i grammatikundervisningen?

How often do you use ICT in grammar teaching?

Vad använder du dig då av för källor?
What kind of sources do you then use?

Vad är skillnaden mellan att använda IKT och läroböcker?
What is the difference between using ICT and course books?

Tror du det ena är bättre än det andra?
Do you think one way is better than the other?

Känner du dig säker på hur du ska använda IKT i undervisningen?
Do you feel secure in how to carry out the teaching with the help of ICT?

Finns det tillräckligt med resurser som du kan använda dig av?
Are there enough resources for you to use?

Anser du att IKT är en hjälp i din undersivning? Varför/varför inte?
Do you find ICT is an aid in your teaching? Why/why not?

Har elevernas resultat påverkats av att du använt IKT I grammatikundervisningen? I så fall hur?
Has the students' results been affected by the use if ICT in grammar teaching? If so, in what way?

Appendix 2

Interview questions school 3

Hur gammal är du?

How old are you?

Hur länge har du jobbat som lärare?

How long have you worked as a teacher?

Vilka ämnen undervisar du i?

What subjects do you teach?

Vad är ett bra sätt att lära ut grammatik?

What is a good way to teach grammar?

Hur lär du ut grammatik?

How do you teach grammar?

Vad finns det för fördelar med det?

What are the advantages of that?

Några nackdelar?

Any disadvantages?

Jobbar du mycket med boken?

Do you work closely with the book?

Vad tror du om att använda IKT i grammatikundervisningen?

What do you think about using ICT in grammar teaching?

Tror du det ena är bättre än det andra?

Do you think one way is better than the other?

Vad tror du är den stora skillnaden mellan att använda IKT och böcker?

What do you think is the difference between using ICT and books?