

Strategies to promote interaction

Strategier för att främja interaktion

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Preface

The following degree project has been co-authored, and we hereby state that we have been equally engaged in the project. This includes formulating the research questions, finding participants, analyzing the gathered material, finding previous research and literature, and writing the different sections of the project. Moreover, the interviews were conducted together, and the transcriptions of the interviews were equally divided between us. Our signatures below confirm the cooperation between the authors:

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how teachers use strategies to promote interaction. It is our ambition to find out how teachers perceive interaction and how they think their students may benefit from their use of strategies.

The sociocultural theory on learning is used as a theoretical framework for this study. This framework aligns with our research questions as well as the prior research that we present.

Prior research suggests that in order for the students to develop a foreign language they need to be provided with an authentic context and a variety of opportunities to interact.

We conducted three semi-structured interviews with qualified teachers teaching at primary school level. Our gathered results are presented under four different themes connected to our research questions. The results show that these teachers reported using strategies mostly as scaffolding and were somewhat unaware of how to define a strategy. Also, the teachers' perception of interaction did not always align with prior research.

Moreover, research suggests that students need to be taught communicative strategies explicitly in order to implement these when solving problems. Our results show that in order for this to happen the teachers need to use strategies more frequently during lessons.

The major conclusions of this study are that the educators we interviewed, did not focus on using strategies as much as researchers suggest they should. Also, there was a misconception of what defines as interaction and we got the idea that the educators thought that planning lessons with a focus on interaction and strategies were more time consuming than using the English textbook.

Keywords

communication, communicative strategies, EFL, interaction, sociocultural theory, strategies.

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Introduction

During our teacher training in the field (VFU) at primary school level 4 to 6, we noticed a lack of oral communication and interaction during English lessons. Most of the instructions and tasks were given in Swedish, and the teacher was the predominant speaker in the classroom. We felt that the teachers failed to create meaningful situations where the students had to interact with each other. This lack of interaction made the lessons teacher-oriented with little to no opportunities for the students to develop their speaking skills. Furthermore, when working with tasks, only a few of the students used the target language, and the only scaffolding that occurred, was translating instructions into Swedish so that the students would understand. We also noticed that many of the teachers used the textbooks as a sole tool for the tasks, and we felt there was a lack of thought to create meaningful learning overall. Many of the teachers were also quick to make corrections in the students' speech and pronunciation, shifting the focus from *what* they say, to *how* they say it.

When we asked the teachers about their choices in the classroom, many of them answered "it is too hard for the students" or "they would not understand the instructions if I only spoke English". This means that the teachers in question do not see the potential of the student's development, and by doing so, they miss the opportunity to challenge them in the learning process. Today, English is a big part of the students' everyday life, which makes their oral interaction skill an important topic to discuss. If we as teachers are going to prepare our students to become the best English speakers they can be, we must take a closer look at what methods we use to get them there.

When looking at recent statistics from Skolverket (Swedish Ministry of Education), we can see that 8,9% of the students in year 6 were unable to achieve grade E in English in 2017. The number has risen by 0,6% since 2016 and is now higher than previous years. One of the reasons for this, according to Skolverket, may be that the educators today are unable to reach out to the various needs and interests of all individuals in the classroom (Skolverket, 2017). The aims and goals of the Swedish syllabus for English (2011) have changed over time, and the focus has moved away from structure and form towards a more versatile set of interaction skills and strategies. We have found great support for this in the syllabus, and chose to illuminate the extracts from the aim, listed below:

- Teaching of English should aim at developing pupils' confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for different purposes.

- Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills, which involve the ability to interact with others, both in the written and spoken language.
- Communicative skills also involve the use of strategies in order to support communication and the ability to solve problems when the language skills by themselves are not enough.
- To be able to develop these skills, the students should be given rich opportunities to practice in relevant situations (p.32-33).

Because the Swedish curriculum for the compulsory school (Lgr11) is based primarily on the sociocultural perspective, where learning occurs in the interaction with others, we were surprised by the frequent, individual assignments and the “no talking” policies in the classrooms. In a report, published by Skolinspektionen (2011), it was found that lessons with a meaningful use of English were the most successful. In these lessons, the teachers used the target language when giving instructions and interacting with the students. Moreover, they did not correct small errors, but, instead, the students were given time to figure out synonyms and conjunctions to make themselves understood. One of the things that supports the suggestion that the oral interaction is preferable is the fact that many people can engage and participate in the conversation. This makes the activity less predictable than other activities, such as reading. Interaction skills are therefore heavily affected by their context and may help create more authentic and natural learning situations (Bygate, 2001).

The students need to be aware of the importance of knowing English for future encounters with the world. With increased contact between countries, there is a rise in the need of interaction skills in a second or third language. If they are provided with knowledge as such, the learning becomes more authentic and purposeful. It thereby helps the students to develop a deeper understanding of language learning (Lundahl, 2014). We have to keep in mind that it is quite unnecessary to strive for a native-like pronunciation when the language is spread internationally. Since the most important reason for learning English is to be able to communicate and interact, the only thing that is crucial is to produce understandable and clearly spoken English (Lundahl, 2014). All students should be given the opportunity to participate in different interactive situations, in groups and individually, that will help them to improve their oral interaction skill (Skolverket, 2012). Since Lundahl (2014) argues that the ability to speak the language is what matters for the learners, it is crucial that the schools are providing the

students with opportunities to develop these abilities.

Purpose

The main purpose of our degree project is to investigate if teachers promote a communicative classroom, and if so, how do they promote them and why. As mentioned in the introduction, communication is an important part of language learning, and we would argue that it is something that we must devote a lot of our time to. There is little research conducted on speaking strategies in years 4-6 in a Nordic linguistic context. We would therefore like to contribute to the research concerning *if* and *how* teachers promote interaction, with the help of strategies, to help the students develop their oral skills. We would also like to investigate the level of influence that the students have when it comes to the choice of strategies to use when producing language in the classroom. Our aim is to provide other teachers with relevant knowledge regarding the use of strategies when it comes to interaction.

Research question

- What strategies are teachers using to promote interaction in the English class?
 - How and why are these strategies being used?
 - What are the teachers' perception of interaction in the classroom? When does it occur?
 - How much influence do the students have in the choice of which strategies to use, when interacting?

Literature review

In this section, we will define and explain the theoretical framework that we find relevant to our research. Terms such as English as a foreign language (EFL), teacher-oriented teaching, and communicative strategies will be explained. Moreover, the sociocultural theory will be presented, and its relation to communication and interaction will be clarified.

Sociocultural theory

The Swedish curriculum is grounded in a sociocultural perspective developed by psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky states that language is a crucial part of social interaction and understanding of the outside world. Furthermore, he writes that we can create a social arena by expanding our knowledge, at the same time as we are developing our language. In this arena, we get a chance to connect the language learning to a purpose and put it into a social context, which in turn creates a greater opportunity for learning (Strandberg, 2006 and Vygotsky, 1978).

When Vygotsky writes about the socio-cultural theory, he also explains the term “Zone of Proximal Development,” often referred to as ZPD (Strandberg, 2006 and Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky claims that you reach the ZPD when the amount of scaffolding from the educator decreases, at the same time as the student take ownership of their knowledge. This means that the student is moving towards completing the task independently, and hereby finds him/herself in the zone of proximal development. In this state, the student should be able to use one or several of the strategies the educator has previously explained, when he/she is learning something new (Lundgren, Säljö & Liberg, 2014).

According to researchers Lightbown and Spada (2013), it is in the social interaction with others that we learn how to communicate successfully. In addition to this, Wenger (2010) states that learning is something that occurs constantly and more often together with others. To be able to learn, we need a way to communicate, preferably an oral way to communicate - speaking. When communicating with others through speaking we get a direct response and feedback that helps us to develop our thoughts further. We may also create a meaningfulness and authenticity through our social engagements that are harder to achieve without interaction with others. Tornberg (2009) argues that the need for communicative competence is one of the things that have had the largest impact on modern language teaching in Sweden. She also underlines the importance of using the target language when interacting in various learning

situations, to be able to achieve the best learning outcome.

Communication strategies

When we communicate in our first language, we usually speak coherently and go from one idea to the next with ease. When we want to do this in a foreign language, we most often encounter various obstacles. Bialystok (1990) refers to them as “gaps in our knowledge”. These gaps might be a word that we cannot translate, a sentence structure that we might be unsure of or an idiom that we have difficulties translating. Since we still want to be understood, we might try to go around the obstacle and explain it in a different way. This process is what Bialystok (1990) roughly define as a communicative strategy (CS). The term “strategy” is also used several times in the Swedish curriculum for English (2011), even so in the knowledge requirements. There are several communicative interaction strategies which works in various situations and for different learners. Bialystok (1990) goes on to say that all speakers of a language use some form of CS but that it is not as apparent for native speakers, as it is for non-native speakers. It is crucial to have a repertoire of various CS to tackle these obstacles head on, but many CS are introduced only *when* the speaker has difficulties producing or understanding a language.

When we discuss strategies, there are different ways in which they can be taught and used. Explicit learning or knowledge is a conscious and active process often referred to as “to know what” and explained as collected data that we store in our minds. Implicit on the other hand is a passive process known as the “to know how”, that is the knowledge of how to do something with the explicit knowledge that we have stored. This implicit knowledge is often gained incidentally, without awareness of what has been learned and takes place naturally and simply (Krashen, 1982).

Furthermore, research has shown that an increase in implicit learning can be reached through the consistent use of visual and verbal modes in education (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Explicit knowledge often shows when students need to solve a problem individually. When learners are asked to make judgements or reflections, they typically try to access previously stored knowledge to help them do so, if they feel unable to make an intuitive judgement (Ellis, 2009).

During 2011, Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2012) researched the use of communicative strategies in an EFL classroom. Their results showed that the teachers were not aware that they used strategies themselves and therefore did not have the ability to provide their students with them. However, of the total of communication strategies used by the teachers in their study,

25% were language switch, 17% clarification request, 12% comprehension check, 12% asking confirmation, 10% translation, 9% repetition, 5% paraphrase, 4% code-based confirmation check, 3% other reformulation, 2% meaning replacement, and 1% mime. Furthermore, they argue that communication strategies, unconsciously used in first language, do not automatically transfer to second or foreign language, which can explain the high percentage of language switch during lessons. However, Lundahl (2014) claims that often when students do not know a word or a phrase in English, they tend to communicate by using hands, sounds, inventing new words or describing what they mean. These are typical examples of communicative strategies even though the students may be totally unaware of that fact. It is therefore important that teachers use these strategies as well as explicitly providing their students with them.

Researchers Lightbown and Spada (2013) claim that when a learner is exposed to authentic situations where they feel the need to communicate their thoughts and opinions, there is a greater chance that they will use a CS to negotiate a meaning and come to a mutual understanding. They also write, “According to the interaction hypothesis, negotiation leads learners to acquire the language forms - the words and grammatical structures - that carry the meaning they are attending to” (Lightbown and Spada, 2013, p.165).

One of the most common strategies is to circumlocution and approximation. These strategies are used when a learner is trying to communicate a word that he/she has not yet learned and tries to explain the meaning of the word in a simplified way or using a synonym (Dörnyei, 1995 and Lundahl, 2014). For example, a learner might not have the word “cucumber” and tries to explain it by saying “a long, green vegetable”.

Another important strategy to use in the classroom is one based on “turn-taking” in interaction. This usually means that one person starts talking, and the other continues, which creates an interaction where both learners are contributing in a meaningful interaction. The conversation then moves on and incorporates questions, agreement and disagreement. One of the most beneficial strategies is the use of body language and facial expressions (Lundahl, 2014). Even though the speakers’ answer might be “mmhm”, their facial expression might show something different, which usually enhances the quality of the interaction between the learners. Lundahl (2014) also writes that it is beneficial to provide the learner with pictures and single words as a form of scaffolding when the students are interacting with each other.

Lundahl (2014) suggests that another interaction strategy is to work with and memorize chunks of text and put them into an authentic situation. This hopefully leads to the speaker being able to use the chunk of text or phrase and replacing one or two words to make it into a new sentence. Examples of these chunks can be “My name is...” and “I like/I don’t like”.

When teachers listen to students speaking in the classroom, they usually use “recast” as a form of correction strategy. This refers to the action where the teacher repeats what the learner said, but with the correct use of grammar, pronunciation or conjugation, without saying that what the learner said, was wrong (Lundahl, 2014). This does not, however, automatically mean that the learner will notice the correction and learn it for next time.

Scaffolding

Feedback comes in many forms and is a big part of the learning process. However, you have to be aware that there is a fine line between too little and too much feedback. Too much feedback can limit the students’ development and at the same time, make them question their ability to progress (Lundahl, 2009). Researchers debate back and forth about whether to give corrective feedback on an interaction task or not. When interacting through speech the opportunities for direct feedback are more illuminated than with, for example, writing.

Gibbons (2002) write about different situations in the classroom where direct corrective feedback is fairly common. She explains the pattern as a three-part exchange between teacher and student which gives the students very limited chances to communicate and develop. Still, a number of researchers have described this as being the dominant interactional pattern in classrooms:

In this pattern of interaction, the teacher first asks a question (almost certainly one to which he or she knows the answer); the student responds, often with a single word or short answer; and then the teacher responds by evaluating the answer. Such interactions are sometimes referred to as IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback). (Gibbons, 2002, p.16)

In order to create a meaningful language learning, the students must be given more varied opportunities to interact. Also, when using corrective feedback, it must be authentic and positive (Gibbons, 2002). Nevertheless, Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that opportunities for freer communication, without corrective feedback, does not cause learners to do less well on measures of linguistic accuracy.

In terms of feedback as scaffolding and scaffolding as support, researchers show a disunity here as well. The term “formative feedback” supports the idea that the learner is placed at the center of the educational process. Their own process. However, in this process the students need scaffolding as well as feedback to progress (Lundahl, 2009). It must be taken into

consideration that scaffolding is not another term for help. It is more of a pit stop on the way towards a skill or knowledge. As mentioned earlier, what a child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow. In a class of 25 students, you have to create tasks that are suitable for the whole group. Moreover, instead of simplifying a task you should provide scaffolding and give every student a chance to carry out the task (Gibbons, 2002).

Lundahl (2014) states that in order to help create confident speakers and authentic communication you have to provide some feedback. The feedback, however, needs to be formative and concerning *what* instead of *how*. Trying to give the students feedback on their ability to speak native-like is not aligned with the syllabus for English (2011) and not efficient when developing communicative skills.

Spoken interaction

According to Read (2007), there are two parts of spoken interaction. The first one is called spoken interaction and refers to the ability to handle interactions with others, such as to ask and answer questions. The second part is about spoken production. This refers to the ability to produce the language needed to, for instance, retell a story or to describe something. Even though children may be good at imitating sounds and words, we should not forget that it is difficult for children to interact in, and produce, a foreign language. This is something we must consider when planning appropriate activities for the classroom (Read 2007).

Dell Hymes (1970), is the linguist who first coined the concept of “Communicative competence”. He wrote about the importance of communicating when learning a language and said that we should see language as a social phenomenon. He also claimed that we need to develop the learner’s ability to adapt the language to different purposes. His concept was then developed further, by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, who together made a model for the concept of communicative competence (1980). This model was made to show the different components a learner should develop, to be able to communicate in a second language. In this model, there are four principles, *grammatical competence*, *discourse competence*, *sociolinguistic competence* and *strategic competence*:

- The first principle is called *grammatical competence*, which contains all the grammatical components you need to develop to learn a language. This ranges from vocabulary to syntax and morphology.

- The second principle is called *discourse competence*. This is where the ability to make the language fluent and natural comes in, where you put sentences together to make it coherent.
- *Sociolinguistic competence* is the third principle and much as the name reveals, it concerns the ability to use and adapt your language in the appropriate situations.
- Lastly, comes the principle of *strategic competence*. This means that the learner should be able to use a fitting strategy to solve whatever problem the language might cause. Some of these strategies might include reformulation or questioning. (Lundahl, 2014 p.24)

Often, it is not beneficial to insist that children participate in activities if they feel they are not ready. It may even be counterproductive. It is far better to provide several situations and activities where the students get the chance to participate, which enhances the chances of them joining in when they feel comfortable. It is also vital that the classroom environment is secure and open enough to receive the learner when he/she is ready (Read, 2007). In order to ensure a classroom environment that is open for the learners, Read (2007) suggests that the educator should create routines in the classroom. This includes, for instance, saying “hello” and goodbye” or asking for permissions, with every activity. When the students get exposed to such language, they develop a familiarity with the sounds and patterns of English, and they may learn it in a natural, unforced way (Read, 2007). One of the more important, overall ideas that you can find in the curriculum for English is that “Language is the primary tool human beings use for thinking, communicating and learning” (Skolverket 2011a, p.32). This means that we need to create an environment that is safe for learning together in pairs and groups through interaction (Lundahl, 2014).

Read (2007) argues that the confidence of the English learners is of utmost importance. To enhance their confidence, the educator should provide the students with various models and frameworks in combination with different opportunities for meaningful practice to support the students. In her book, *500 Activities for the Primary Classroom*, Read writes that “Whenever possible, it is beneficial to establish frameworks where children are motivated to speak and feel that they have something they *want* to say (Read, 2007, p.18). Educators should also try to ensure an acceptance of “approximate pronunciation”, since insisting on the correct pronunciation may hinder their development in producing speech (Read, 2007). The previous Swedish curricular model for English (Lpo94) had a main focus on the English grammar and stated that you need a firm grasp on the basics of grammar to be able to interact. The current

model, however, points more towards interaction, and how you acquire the grammatical system when you interact in meaningful English (Lundahl, 2014).

Communication and the syllabus

Lundahl (2014) claims that the Swedish syllabus for English (Skolverket 2011) is a document full of freedom for the teachers, in comparison to many other countries. The syllabus does not contain any comments about how teachers should create their activities or what material should be used. The syllabus does, however, carry the ideology that language in years 4-6 is learned in the interaction with others (Lundahl, 2014). Ellis (2005) has summarized, what he thinks, are the most important criterion to focus on when teaching EFL. We have chosen to illuminate the following five points from his list:

1. **English should be used as much as possible**

In order for children to develop their target language, the need to be provided with many opportunities to do so. To do this, Lundahl (2014) suggest that there needs to be a clear understanding and agreement in the classroom, also that English should be used at all times. The teacher also needs to speak English as much as possible and in every activity. Lundahl (2014) goes on to write that the importance of constant use of English should be included in the syllabus.

2. **The content should relate to learners' interests and include increasing challenges**

Since the students are getting older and developing their skills more and more along the way, the material and activities should also increase and become more challenging. Children get more aware of their surroundings and are able to think more abstract thoughts as they get older.

3. **It is necessary to focus on meaning**

The basic notion of language learning today is that we learn it by expressing meaning. This means that we should not focus on the errors as something wrong, but rather be seen as natural occurrences in language development. Therefore, the feedback comments from the teacher, should focus on *what* they are saying as opposed to *how* they are saying it.

4. **Strategies need to be included**

Strategies is an important part of language learning and should be used and taught as much as possible. To be a good language learner, you need to have a repertoire of different strategies to choose between when producing language.

5. **There should be a focus on phrases**

It is vital to teach common phrases and chunks of text, as they are a very big part of any language (Ellis, 2005 p.40-44).

Teacher-driven vs. learner-driven

In 2014, Suryati (2015) conducted a research in an EFL classroom about the amount of interaction that occurred. The study showed that teachers spent 93% of the lesson time for teacher-student interaction and 7% for student-student interaction. She also states that during the teacher-student interaction, the most popular interaction strategies used were asking questions (38%), teacher echoes (17.3%) and giving feedback on form (7.9%). This resulted in lessons where students had very limited opportunities to participate and to practice speaking English in order to develop their communicative skills. Moreover, Suryati (2015) emphasizes the importance of providing and adopting interaction strategies that are more scaffolding and facilitative to amplify the students' interaction skills. If such strategies can be employed successfully, students' general performance should increase.

Granström (cited by Lundahl, 2009) argues that there are three dominating work models that occur in the English classroom: teaching the whole class, working in groups and individual work. Working individually with textbooks or workbooks is the most common form of English teaching. However, the most vital part of language learning is communication and interaction, which occurs more naturally when working in groups or pairs. Different forms of interaction require different amounts of participation, and therefore lead to various levels of learning and development.

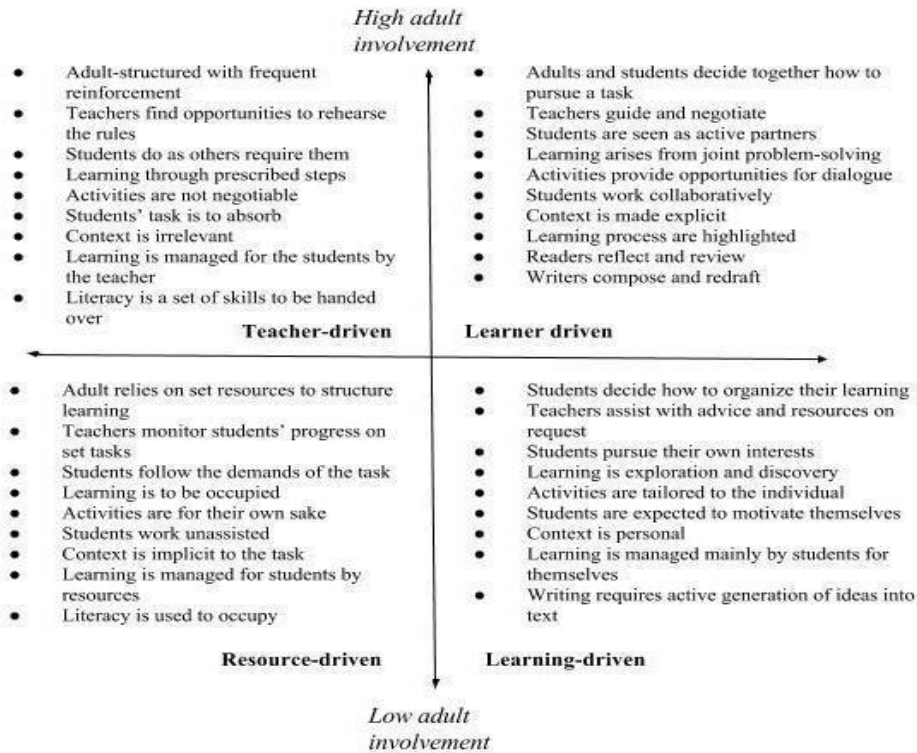
When teaching English, you have to know your students well enough to be able to make them feel included. You also have to take into consideration that there is a fine line between inspiring and steering your student towards purposeful and authentic conversations by being the sole leader of all interactions in the classroom. This depends on what views teachers have on language learning as a requirement of skills or a communicative process. If the language learning is teacher-driven, and seen as a requirement of skills, then the teacher is the main

source and provider of knowledge. However, the students' main purpose is to answer questions asked by the teacher and to absorb the knowledge handed to them. This also affects the amount of target-language used during lessons and depends on the teachers' language level. This model limits the interaction in the classroom and has a low student initiative. Also, the learning is most likely enquired through prescribed steps and without context (Lundahl, 2009 & Tornberg 2009).

Tomlinson (1999) writes about interest-based learning, which means that if the students are interested in the subjects and assignments that you teach, the students' willingness to learn also increases immensely. This means that there is a higher chance that the students will be motivated to try their best and succeed, if you create assignments that are both relatable and interesting to them (Tomlinson, 1999). It is therefore crucial for the educator to choose material and activities that the students can relate to in their everyday life and provide an education that is learner-driven rather than teacher-driven.

According to Ajayi (2011), it is also important to consider, and take advantage of, the English that the students are exposed to outside of school. He also states that it is beneficial that the educators challenge the traditional use of textbooks as the sole source of knowledge and teaching, and instead create a purposeful learner-driven environment for language learning (Ajayi, 2009). Most of the literature surrounding interest based and learner-driven learning, also discuss the importance of the social interaction when learning a second language and how the constant interaction helps develop students' knowledge in a more natural way. When using a socio-cultural way of teaching, the students' social arena grows more comfortable and natural over time. This also creates an authentic context for language use (Gibbons, 2002).

A learner-driven and communicative classroom is proven to be a success by many researchers and provides the students with the tools they need to develop all parts of their language (Lundahl, 2009 & Tornberg, 2009). Through the interaction with others in a student-oriented environment both implicit and explicit knowledge is proven to be developed and strengthened (Hughes Willhelm, 2006). The picture below shows the different models of teaching and how they correlate with each other. (Lundahl, 2009, pg. 130)



Hughes Wilhelm (2006) emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in the classroom. The role of the teacher is essential for the communicative interactions in the classroom to work naturally as a tool. Furthermore, she states that the role of the teacher should be multifaceted and changing, instructional developer, learning facilitator and critical reviewer rather than instructor and sole provider of knowledge. Moreover, Lundahl (2009) argues that the main reason to why teachers are hesitant to use group work and pair work is that they don't want to give up control. Hughes, Wilhelm (2006) confirms these theories but also emphasizes that "The teacher is not asked to *give up control* in order to use pair work and group work. The teacher is asked to *exercise control* in order to use pair work and group work" (p.38), and that "[...] it may actually take more skill for a teacher to be a facilitator [...] than it may take to use teacher-fronted instruction, being a sage on a stage" (p.39).

English as a foreign language

English as a foreign language, EFL, is a term often used to describe English learners that lives in a country where English is not their first or second language. In this text we will use the abbreviation, EFL or EFL speakers.

Method

In this following chapter, we will illuminate and explain our choice of methods for collecting data. Our purpose with this degree project was what determined what methods to choose.

Semi-structured interviews

We want to create an authenticity and validity in our results by conducting interviews with practicing teachers. From a validity perspective, Alvehus (2013) describes validity as a measure of how well the research answers the questions that were to be researched.

Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used type of research method and often described as a compromise between structured and open interviews. These types of interviews are often called a ‘conversation with a purpose - the gold standard of qualitative research. The interviewer of a semi-structured interview has a clear image of the topics that need to be covered but is prepared to allow the interview to develop unexpectedly towards important new areas of information. Also, if interviews are conducted properly, they can provide insights into people's experiences, beliefs, perceptions and motivations at a depth that is not possible with a survey (Richards, 2009).

The drawbacks with choosing a qualitative method is that its result will not be applicable in greater contexts, e.g. heterogeneous classes or schools, and it may only reflect one specific group instead of a phenomenon (Alvehus, 2013).

It is a common mistake to think of qualitative data analysis as subjective. However, it is important to let the voices of the participants to emerge clearly. That is why we decided to record our interviews so that we could go back and listen to the answers again when presenting our findings. This also allowed us to be more flexible with our questions, and we were able to collect answers outside of the prepared ones (Richards, 2009).

Procedure

We started the process with a post on Facebook, where we asked to come in contact with qualified primary school teachers for an interview. We explained the purpose of the interview and what our degree project was about. In the post, which generated 11 responds from teachers in Skåne willing to participate, we stated our main criteria:

Qualified teacher.

Teaching English in primary school years 4-6.

Living in Skåne, preferably in or around Malmö.

Being able to participate in the near future.

Alvehus (2013) emphasize the importance of making a strategic selection of participants in a study. We made our selection based on three main criteria. We selected three teachers who all are qualified to teach English in primary school, grades 4-6 and still practicing. Since we felt it was necessary that the teachers had some educational background in the teaching profession, the criteria of having a qualification was vital. Due to our limited time frame for this degree project, the teachers had to be available for interviews shortly after we contacted them. Lastly, they all had to be located in Skåne, both because of the time limit but also because we have limited resources for transportation. The interviews were conducted with three different qualified primary school teachers and included nineteen questions (see appendix 1). The interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The questions were thought through and carefully selected to align with our research questions.

According to Alvehus (2013), the interviewer may not be as attentive when listening to the answers when he/she need to write down everything that is being said. This is why we decided to record the interviews, so that we could listen to them afterwards, transcribe them, and make the results as accurate as possible. Consequently, all three interviews were recorded using an iPhone and then later transcribed into a document on Google Drive.

The interviews were all conducted in the teacher's classroom, at a time of their choosing that aligned with our time plan. Bryman (2011) states that it is important that the interviews are being held in an environment that is calm and comfortable for the interviewees. This in turn, will make the pedagogues feel more at ease during the interviews. Both authors were present and equally involved in all interviews. Moreover, the interviews were done in English to help make the transcription easier and the topic clearer.

Ethical considerations

All participants are informed of what this degree project is about and that it is based on voluntary participation. We assured the interviewees that the recorded material was not to be shared with anyone. As all of the teachers were informed that they would be anonymous, we have created false names for the teachers. The teachers will in this degree project be known as T1, T2 and T3. We did not send out the interview questions in advance to the participating teachers, as we wanted to receive their spontaneous perceptions and thoughts. However, if the

interviewees would have been able to read the questions in advance they would have had time to think through their answers which then could have been more profound.

We decided to record the interviews because we wanted our gathered data to be as relevant and valid as possible (Alvehus, 2013). Lazaraton (2009) accentuates the importance of recording interviews in order to “get the full picture” and “remember all of the responses”. However, we must acknowledge the fact that openly recording interviews may influence the communication. Alvehus (2013) declares that when recording interviews, the interviewee may be limited by the recorder and may feel uncomfortable to speak out. However, the recorder could also make the interviewee feel safer, knowing that what they say is recorded word by word.

When we transcribed the interviews, we anonymized the answers by using T1, T2 and T3, instead of the teachers’ real names. This also helps us exclude the interviewees’ gender, as it is not relevant to our study. We decided to exclude pauses and fillers such as “Ehm...” from the transcription, as they were of no relevance to the study.

Results

In this section, we will present our gathered results collected through the semi-structured interviews conducted with three qualified primary school teachers. Since we interviewed three teachers, we will refer to them as T1, T2 and T3. We have summarized the answers, and in some cases also provided relevant quotes that we transcribed. The results are divided into four different themes that aligns with our research questions: Scaffolding and strategies, To what extent if the target language being used?, What is interaction according to the teachers? And Learner- vs. Teacher-driven lessons.

Scaffolding and strategies

We asked the teachers if they see themselves as a part of the scaffolding and if so how. T1 stated that during group or pair activities T1 acted as observer or wordlist. However, when asked the same question T2 and T3 stated that they often take part in the activity with a purpose to “get the students started” and “give them pointers”.

When asked; “What communicative strategies are you providing the students with, to help them develop their ability to interact?”, T1 gave concrete and clear examples of scaffolding strategies being used in their classroom. The examples given were the use of a wordlist where they collect relevant words and phrases before activities. In the classroom, one can also find a list of bullet-points that includes different scaffolding strategies to use when speaking English. When we asked T2 and T3 the same question, they answered that they use a lot of EPA as a strategy in their classrooms, but also Google translate as scaffolding. In T3’s class, the students also work with discussion-cards to help them develop their interaction skills, something that they have been inspired by the national tests to try.

We also asked the teachers about how much time they spend on developing strategies, and if their students get to choose which ones to use when interacting. We found that the answers varied. Both T1 and T2 answered that the amount of time they spent on planning was not much because most of the strategies they used in class are implemented from other subjects like Swedish. However, T3 stated that it takes about an hour a week of planning and that the planning is often made a couple of weeks ahead. Also, T1 thinks that the students use strategies implicitly when interacting with each other. The same goes for the students in T2s class, but that they need a reminder of the different strategies from time to time. During the interview, T3 established that the students need to spend more time learning different strategies to be able to choose for themselves.

When asked questions regarding scaffolding, all three teachers indicated that they use different types of scaffolding strategies in their classroom. T1 listed both wordlists, time to practice and recycling language as well as the importance of the use of varied materials. T1 also believes that in order for students to develop, they need to get exposed to a lot of English as well as being asked to produce English themselves. Furthermore, T2 and T3 both use translation as scaffolding and the strategy C3B4ME, developed by Dylan Wiliam (2011), meaning that the students should ask three classmates before asking the teacher.

We also asked the teachers questions about feedback and progression connected to the interaction in their classrooms. They all use different kinds of rubrics, some of them are self-made and some are included within the teacher's guide. T1 stated that the rubrics are used as scaffolding, making sure that the students are aware of their learning. On the other hand, the rubrics that T3 and T2 used, were meant for assessing the students throughout the whole year with the purpose of helping the teacher set final grades. Furthermore, all three teachers said that they used "two stars and a wish" for peer assessment and self-assessment on homework and writing assignments. When asked about if and how the formative feedback and rubrics progress as the students grow older, they all declared that it do so naturally. T2 and T3 also said that their progression followed the teaching materials they use. T1, however, emphasizes the importance of the progression and development of feedback following the development of the students.

To what extent is the target language being used?

When we asked the interviewees about when they do or do not speak English in the classroom, their answers were similar to each other. All three teachers declared that they try to speak English all the time but tend to switch to Swedish when giving instructions. T1 also added that many of the students often get stressed when they have difficulties understanding, and that is why the teacher often switches to Swedish. T2 answered that "it is more important for my students to know what to do, and what I expect of them, than me staying on English all the time".

When asked if the amount of English being used in class changes over time, T1 answered "Yes, I would like to think so.", T3 said "I try to, but my students often complain when they don't understand something immediately.". T2, however, said, "I don't know. Have never thought about it. Maybe!", and later added that it probably changes with the students' knowledge development. Both T2 and T3 also said that the amount of English used for

instructions in their teaching materials, gradually increases. T1, stated that they hope to only speak English during English class next year.

We moved on to questions about the *students* use of the target language, T1 explained that the students rather speak English if they have proper scaffolding to help them. T2 and T3 declared that the students are not comfortable speaking English in front of the entire class, but they do so in pairs or smaller groups. In addition, all the interviewees found that their students are more comfortable speaking English with the teacher than with their classmates.

What is interaction according to the teachers?

When we asked questions concerning in which situations the children were more willing to speak English in the classroom, we got similar answers from all three teachers. They all stated that the children were the most comfortable, and willing to speak, in situations where they felt that there was a “right” or “wrong” answer. This usually refers to the situations in which the teacher asks them a question and the children respond with a yes, no or with a single-word answer. All of the teachers also said that the students were more likely to speak English if the teacher was the one asking questions. All of the teachers stated that the students have a chance to affect the education. T1 added that the students were more willing to speak if they had some scaffolding previously or during the activity. However, when asked the same question, T3 promptly answered “never” and went on to say that it is difficult getting the children to interact. All of the teachers answered that their students are most willing to interact during activities in smaller groups or in pairs.

However, when the teachers were asked when the students were less willing to speak, they all answered that the students had a hard time expressing their thoughts and opinions. T1 also said, “Definitely when I ask questions about how they think about something or what they feel (...) or if I ask them to explain or describe something”. They also stated that the children were less willing to speak when they had to do so in front of the entire class.

When we asked the question “In which situations do you think that the students are interacting with each other?” we received some varied answers. T1 answered “All the time” and went on to explain that the students often read in pairs. When we asked for clarification, the teacher explained that they referred to when the children were practicing dialogues from the textbook or reading aloud to each other. T2 also said that the students interact by reading in pairs and that they frequently give each other feedback on their homework. Both T2 and T3 said that their students often work in pairs, and that it is a good method for when they need

someone to lean on when they are producing the target language. Furthermore, T3 defined interacting as something the students do in pairs when they are reading together and working together in the workbook. They also work together in smaller groups, with reflection activities, after they have seen a movie or read a book. As scaffolding, the students receive cards with topics or questions during the reflection time.

All of the teachers said that they interact with the students during group work. Most of the time, they walk around and listen and answer questions. They all said that they sometimes join the group by asking questions, to get the conversation started. They also agree on using the “Think-Pair-Share” model (EPA), which means that the students first reflect on a question or a topic individually, interact with a classmate and tell them what they thought about, and they then raise their reflection to the whole class.

We asked a question concerning how the interaction and feedback changes over time, as the students get older, and received the same answer from all three teachers. They all started by saying “I think that it progresses naturally”. They all referred back to how both the textbook and the workbook have a natural progression in difficulty between the different years. They all answer that it is important that the interaction and feedback evolve simultaneously as the children get older and more knowledgeable. T2 summarized the answer with “I think it does that naturally especially since we use both a textbook and a workbook that is different for each grade.”

To the question about what implicit learning the teacher thinks occurs when the students are interacting, T1 answered “I think that they get a wider vocabulary without even knowing”. T1 continued by saying that the students copy each other a lot when working in groups and pairs, and that they learn a lot from each other. They also explained that they feel that the students in need of extra support when interacting are helped by the stronger speakers in the classroom. The answer we got from T3 is similar, but they also said that “they learn to think in English when they try to respond to someone speaking in English to them”.

Learner- vs Teacher-driven lessons

T1 said that when the students got a chance to impact the activities and tasks, there was a risk that they used Swedish to interact, instead of English. When we asked, “Do the students get to choose which strategies to use when interacting?”, T2 and T3 were very certain that they could, but both agreed that they needed to remind the students about the strategies before every task. T3 also admitted that, upon hearing our question, they needed to make the students more aware

of what strategies to use when dealing with a language problem. T1, on the other hand, stated that the students probably do this all the time without being aware of or reflecting about it.

The answers varied when we asked about the amount of student involvement when choosing themes and activities for English class. T1 said that there is “some” involvement and gave an example of when they were watching a movie, and the students could work with the movie, from whatever angle or theme, they wanted to. They also said that they have an “Idea box” in the classroom, where the students can put notes with ideas on what they were interested in learning next. Both T2 and T3 said that the students in their class are not very involved in the planning of English lessons, as they do in other subjects. T3 also says that sometimes the students can suggest watching a certain movie or reading a book they like. They also use the textbook as a base but skip the chapters that the students find boring.

We asked a question about what the teachers thought was most important when planning lessons with interaction. T1 and T2 both answered “time”. They said that it is important to make time for planning but also to make time for the students’ interaction activities, since they need a lot of it. T2 also said that the teacher’s guide that comes with the textbook is a great help when planning lessons. T3, however, said that the most important thing when planning is to take the students skill level in consideration. T3 also said that if possible it is beneficial to incorporate some Swedish into the lessons, so that the students may learn Swedish and English at the same time. This way, you can work with themes throughout the various subjects.

When we asked about changes in the progression of difficulty during the activities and lessons, many of the teachers answered that they use the textbook as a reference system. They all said that the textbook has a clear progression and that the feedback automatically follows. T2 also said, “At the beginning, the instructions are both in Swedish and in English but as we work further into the book; this changes and it is less and less Swedish in the book”. T3 answered that there definitely has been progression in the use of English in the classroom, only since the year before. They also say that they hear a fair amount of complaining from the students when the teachers use English more. Regarding the question on feedback, the answers were very much the same. Every answer referred to the textbook and how “the feedback needs to follow the same curve as the children”. T3 added that this progression is visible in the student’s workbook as well as in their textbook, and that the glossary words get more and more difficult the further in the textbook you read.

To the question “How do you use the textbook in your teaching? How does it promote interaction?”, both T2 and T3 declared that they use the textbook “all the time”, working with one chapter a week. T1 use the book as a complement to other teaching methods but adds that

“Sometimes they need a lesson where they “only” work with the book.” T3 also said, once more that the teaching materials they use has a clear progression and that they work with both hard copies and online materials. In T2s class the students often read dialogues from the textbook in pairs, whereas in T3s class, the students work together in pairs or groups, both with the online reading material and workbook. All the interviewees also add to the teaching materials using free digital material, novels and movies.

Discussion

In the following part, we will discuss, analyze and compare previous research in relation to our results. We have divided our discussion into four sections, dealing with one research question, respectively. Each question will be written in the introduction for each part.

Teaching strategies within EFL

Here, we raise our first research question: *What strategies are teachers using to promote interaction in the English class?* and discuss it in relation to our literature review and results.

The syllabus for English, has changed over time, and the main focus has moved towards a more versatile set of interaction strategies. We found great support for the use of various communicative strategies (CS) in the syllabus for English (2011, p.32), which states that “Teaching in English should essentially give pupils the opportunities to develop their ability to use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood”. In addition, the core content states that “Communicative skills also cover confidence in using the language and the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient”. (Skolverket, 2011 p.32). Even though the teachers that we interviewed may share the same thought about strategies, they admitted to having trouble implementing CS in their teaching. All the interviewed teachers stated that they had problems with promoting interaction in the classrooms since the students were not as willing to talk as they had hoped. This resulted in the teachers helping the students, when they were interacting, to create a more secure environment in the classroom. However, one of the teachers stated that they were helping the students by providing them with direct English translations, rather than giving the students strategies of what to do when they encounter problems in their interaction. We believe that this will create situations where the students have no tools to solve problems when they are outside of the classroom. Bialystok (1990) supports this by discussing the importance of having a repertoire of various CS to be able to tackle obstacles that may occur when producing or understanding a language.

All three teachers answered that they use different strategies without acknowledging them as strategies. Examples of these strategies are word walls or wordlists and digital tools like iPad or Chromebook. This seems to be a common problem in schools today and aligns with the research conducted in 2011 by Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2012). Their research showed that teachers were not aware that they were using strategies themselves. This means that they

did not have the ability to explicitly teach their students about which strategies to use, and when to use them. In contrast, Lundahl (2014) states that students often implicitly use strategies themselves when their vocabulary is lacking, and even more so than adults. Students are usually unaware that they use CS but often use body language, hands or sounds to describe what they intend. However, we believe that all our interviewees would benefit from explicitly providing their students with a varied repertoire of CS to help them interact with each other and develop their language further. This means that the educator should tell their students when they are using a CS and why they are using it. If the students are uncomfortable with the strategy they use, they should eventually be able to choose a different strategy of their own.

When working with interaction in the classroom, it is important to make sure that the topic is something that all students are familiar with or have an understanding about. This helps to create authentic opportunities for interaction and gives all of the students a chance to add to the matter (Gibbons, 2002). T3 states that they work with discussion-cards as a strategy in their class to help develop their interaction skills, which they found inspiration for in the National tests. However, it is our understanding that these types of cards used for discussion and interaction are often not up to date or not really connected to students' interests. If you as an educator use your knowledge about your students' everyday life and interests, when creating discussion-cards, your students will more likely engage in interaction about the discussion topics. One of the better ways to create opportunities like these, is to involve your students in the planning of the lessons. We believe that it is beneficial to ask the students what they would like to talk about during these activities, which will further enhance their interest and engagement in the interaction.

Research shows that "Strategies are an important part of language learning and should be used and taught as much as possible" (Ellis, 2005 p.42), and it makes great sense if you look at how you use and develop your first language. However, when analyzing our results, we found that all three teachers think that they use some strategies like EPA, but only one of the interviewed teachers was able to give concrete and clear examples of what these strategies included, such as lists of bullet-points and word walls with relevant phrases and words. It is important for the educator to know why they are using the specific strategies, and not only for the sole purpose of using a strategy.

The value of strategies

This part will include discussion regarding our second research question: how and why teachers use strategies in their classroom.

In our gathered data, we found that the interviewees are uncertain about what defines a strategy. When being asked about what strategies they provide their students with to help them interact, one of the teachers gave the example of using “Google translate” as a strategy. All of the teachers also said that they translate instructions and phrases into Swedish regularly. Since Bialystok (1990), defines strategies as something we use to fill the “gap in our knowledge” when interacting with others, we would not categorize these methods as strategies but as scaffolding. Moreover, it is difficult to support the educators’ choice of methods since it is rarely something that you can use when interacting outside of the classroom. Interacting in Swedish instead of English, as a method for scaffolding, is thereby not the best option. Not using the target language enables students to do so as well. If you as a teacher do not speak English during lessons, why should they? Lundahl (2009) continually argues that teachers must be aware of the fine line between the right amount of and too much scaffolding. Even though scaffolding is an important part of language learning, educators need to be aware of the difference between scaffolding and strategies. If you use them both to create a good balance, the students will get the optimal learning experience. As Vygotsky says when speaking of ZPD, what a student can do today with support, he or she can do alone tomorrow (Strandberg, 2006). However, students can only complete the task alone if they have been given enough strategies to choose from.

To emphasize the importance of communication and interaction when learning a language, Dell Hymes (1970) founded the concept of “Communicative competence”. He believed that we should look at languages as a social phenomenon that is developed in the interaction with others. With these principles in mind, Canale and Swain (1980) created a model of different components every learner should develop to succeed in language learning. One of these principles refers to strategic competence and means that in order to produce language, every learner should be able to use strategies to solve problems. It is the educators’ responsibility to teach students which strategies to use and when to use them. As mentioned, when we analyzed our gathered data we found that all of the interviewees used strategies of some sort. We have experienced that the problem is usually not the lack of strategies being used, but the teachers lack of informing the students what strategies they are using, and why. When we asked about the students’ own use of strategies, one teacher answered, “I think that

they do so without reflecting so much about it". This is, however, not supported in previous research, which states that in order for the learners to develop their language they need to explicitly develop strategies to use when they encounter problems (Rodríguez and Rodríguez, 2012). From what we have experienced during our teachers practice, many of the students stop talking and look at the teacher for answers when they meet a language barrier, instead of "implicitly" using a strategy to get past the obstacle. This is why we agree with Ellis (2005) when she claims that strategies are an important part of language learning and should be used and *taught* as much as possible.

In our results, we found that two of the teachers spent very little time planning strategies for lessons with a focus on interaction. This was because most of the strategies they used in class were implemented from other subjects, like Swedish. The teacher would incorporate strategies like "ask a friend before you ask the teacher" and "EPA". However, one of the most common strategies that the teachers used, was the translation into Swedish. Bialystok (1990) and Lundahl (2014) claim that using strategies from our first language is not always a success. The problems and obstacles that a learner may encounter in their first language, are usually not the same as the ones they encounter in their second language. Instead of translating into Swedish, the educator can use and teach strategies like circumlocution, where you exemplify the word by describing it. Another strategy to use is approximation, where you use a synonym or a word that is close in meaning, to make yourself understood (Dörnyei, 1995).

Strategies in language learning can also be used to create confident speakers, speakers who interact with others without the fear of failure (Read, 2007). We asked all three teachers in our research if they knew in which situations the students were more or less willing to speak. We found that the students were most comfortable speaking in situations when they knew the right answer and did not have to think, reflect or argue for themselves. Read (2007) suggests that to enhance the students' confidence the teachers should provide them with various opportunities for meaningful interaction and practice. Many of the students also stated that they felt most comfortable speaking in smaller groups, this is something that the educator should use to enhance the students level of confidence. The teachers also agreed that their students felt less comfortable when trying to express feelings and opinions in the target language, even though it is seen as a more interest-based activity. The teacher should therefore try to create several situations where the students are motivated to speak and have something that they want to say (Lundahl, 2014).

Teachers' perception of interaction in the classroom

In this section, we will discuss our third research question, concerning the teachers' perception of interaction in the classroom and when it occurs.

When we carried out our interviews, and later reviewed the answers, we noticed a similarity among the three educators. They all seemed certain about the importance of interaction when learning a language. They also said that the students in their class were interacting frequently. When analyzing their answers, however, we felt that the educators were uncertain of the difference between reading a text in pairs and actual spoken interaction. As defined by Read (2007), spoken interaction is what you do when you engage in a conversation where you, for example, ask and answer questions. For this to happen, you need to have at least two active students, each producing language. While reading a dialogue from a textbook together with a classmate can be a beneficial activity at times, we would not define it as interaction. If the students would, instead of reading the dialogue in pairs, retell the story in their own words, there would be a stronger connection to the production of language (Read, 2007). According to Hymes (1970), we should see language development as a "social phenomenon", where we learn in the interaction with others. Furthermore, in order for the children to develop their sociolinguistic competence, the interaction should occur in various situations so that the students learn to adapt the language for different purposes (Canale and Swain 1980). Since the students will go on to use English outside of the classroom, it is important to create opportunities where the students get the chance to interact in relevant situations. This means that the dialogues from the textbook is not enough. It would be beneficial to create activities where the students can have authentic dialogues and practice English that is useful for the learner in the future.

Another similarity we found with the educators, was that all of their students felt more comfortable speaking English in pairs or smaller groups. However, when we asked the educators about various strategies and activities, none of them gave any clear examples of how they work with interaction in group activities, other than discussion cards. One of the main ideas that supports our research is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Vygotsky argues that in order to develop our language ability, we need to create a social arena, in which we can give the language a social context with a clear purpose (Strandberg, 2006). Here, the students can interact in smaller groups and shape the interaction in accordance with their own interests and opinions. When the students are interacting in smaller groups, they get instant response and feedback from each other, which consequently helps them develop their language further

(Wenger, 2010). Since all of the educators said that their students were less willing to speak in front of the whole class, it would be beneficial to focus on their confidence to produce the target language in smaller groups, before insisting that they raise their thoughts in front of everyone. It has not proven to be beneficial for the educator to insist on participation if the children feel they are not ready (Read, 2007).

We can conclude, from our gathered data, that the target language is used less among the interviewees than recommended by most researchers. The syllabus for English (2011) states that English should be used as much as possible, and Lundahl (2014) even argues that the constant use of English should be added to the syllabus, so that more teachers might adapt this idea. The interviewed educators all said that they frequently translate instructions into Swedish, so that the students would understand what to do. If we compare this to our own experience from our teachers practice, we have noticed that most students do not pay attention to the English instructions used in the classroom, if they know that the teacher will translate it for them if they say, "I do not understand". All of the educators also said that the text books they use contain both Swedish and English instructions and texts. This is not in agreement with Ellis' (2005) thoughts on how to learn a language in the best possible way. One of the main points, according to him, is to have an agreement with the students to use English at all times.

Student influence

In this section, we will be discussing what influence the students have in the choice of strategies to use when producing language in the classroom.

When we write about student influence, we are referring to the idea from the syllabus (2011) that the education should be connected to the students' interests and life outside of the school in order to make them motivated to learn. The students should also have a chance to impact the planning of the lessons and feel that they have a chance to affect what happens in school. If the students can connect their own individuality to their education, it will increase their willingness to succeed and the lessons will become more interest-based (Tomlinsson, 1999). It is also very important, according to Ajayi (2011), to take advantage of the English language and strategy use, that the students learn outside of school. The use of English has changed a lot over the last years, and children are exposed to English much more frequently today. When they start school, they have usually been exposed to English already. Ajayi (2011) argues that we should take a step away from the textbooks and, instead, create a learner-driven environment in our classrooms. Interest-based lessons, in combination with activities for

interaction, will help the students develop their discourse competence, which refers to the ability to produce language that is natural and coherent (Canale and Swain 1980).

During the interviews, the educators said that their students had less influence on the planning of English lessons in comparison to other subjects. We would argue that one of the reasons for this is because of the often-used textbook that lies as a basis for the planning of English lessons. Since it is usually the teachers that are responsible for the choice of textbooks used in school, this means that they are providing resource-driven lessons, which usually fall under the same category as teacher-driven classrooms (Lundahl, 2009 and Tornberg 2009).

We found that all of the educators were using the book as a base when planning the lessons. They all answered that the textbook promotes interaction, but they also said that they add material from other sources as a compliment. Many of the complements, however, were videos or texts. Since the syllabus (2011) states that the children should be exposed to a variety of different sources, this is a beneficial way to work. Only one of the educators claimed to use a different source for the sole purpose of developing the student's ability to interact. There should be several opportunities for the students to practice this ability, so that they may join and produce language when they feel motivated to participate (Read, 2007).

Previous research shows that a classroom driven by learning and learners instead of resources is more likely to be successful in language learning (Lundahl, 2009 and Tornberg, 2009). However, when we asked the interviewees, they all stated that they often plan lessons based on the printed resource that they use and do not include students in the process of planning lessons. In addition, we found that their classrooms are mainly teacher- and resource-driven.

In order to create an environment where student develop their language and skills, teachers must work towards creating authentic opportunities for interaction: an environment that includes students' thoughts and interests (Gibbons, 2002). Lundahl (2009) argues that teaching language should be more learner-driven than resource-driven in order to succeed (see picture on page 19), meaning that the education should be focused on learning and open to students deciding *together* with teachers on how to pursue tasks, what strategies to use, problem-solving, context, and much more. However, this does not mean that well performed language teaching should not include high adult involvement. On the contrary, this model requires teachers to get more involved in order to create a learner-driven classroom environment with high student involvement. Working towards a learner-driven classroom also helps create authentic opportunities and contexts where students can learn through the interaction with each other (Lundahl, 2009 and Gibbons, 2002).

Conclusion

In order to answer our research questions, we will in this section demonstrate the relevant aspects from the findings of our study. The limitations of the study will be presented in this section along with suggestions for further research.

This study presented the reports of three teachers and their use of strategies to promote interaction in the classroom. We found that the educators we interviewed did not focus on using strategies in the English classroom as much as researchers suggest they should. They admitted to applying strategies from other subjects into the English lessons. Since the educators did not focus on developing and teaching strategies, it was hard not to make the conclusion that the knowledge, concerning strategies, is lacking. There needs to be a greater focus on teaching various strategies so that the children have many to choose from when they encounter an obstacle in their production of the language. The teachers' perception of interaction varied, but overall, we believe there was a misconception of the difference between reading to each other and interacting with each other. We got the idea that the educators thought that planning lessons with a focus on interaction and strategies were more time consuming than using the book. This may be one of the reasons why the students did not have much to say about the planning of English lessons. This, however, usually lowers the level of interest and willingness to learn with and from the students.

We believe that our study was very informative when it comes to the subjects of strategies and interaction. We also noticed that during the interviews the educators reacted to their responses with reflection, and some of them even said "I realize now, I should focus more on teaching strategies". This made us both certain that we can at least make the educators question their choices in the classroom and maybe even inspire them to apply our ideas into their teaching.

Limitations of the study

The current study experienced a number of limitations, which may have an effect on the reliability of the findings. We chose the participating teachers strategically, using three main criteria. This might decrease the overall credibility of this study. Due to a limited timeframe, one of our criteria was that the teachers had to be available for interviews shortly after we contacted them. We therefore experienced a geographical limitation, leading to results that are

not representative nationwide. Our results are not generalizable, this because we only interviewed three teachers. These limitations also decrease the probability of the results being in accordance with the majority of teachers in Sweden.

Further research

We found that there is a vast lack of research conducted on primary school teachers regarding strategies and interaction in the EFL classroom. Since both strategies and interaction is very important to incorporate when teaching a language, we believe that it should be further studied in the years 4 to 6. Because the focus has changed from grammar and form, towards interaction, the importance should also be illuminated to the educators that are already working with language teaching today. It would be interesting to investigate how to enhance the students level of confidence further, when they are producing language overall, in the classroom. Speaking in front of the class has always seemed to be an issue. Why is that?

In our education at Malmö University, we learned a great deal about the importance of using strategies and promoting interaction. The English courses were, according to us, some of the most informative courses we attended at the university. However, we do not feel as though the students that did not have English as a specialization subject received the same kind of knowledge, and they seemed to have had more of a focus on grammar, structure and pronunciation. Teacher education programs have a great responsibility in making sure that teacher students are given enough opportunities to develop strategies to promote interaction as well as knowledge on how to explicitly provide their students with such.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Questions for interview

Name:

Subject qualification:

Practice English in grade:

Experience:

1. Approximately, how many hours of English do you teach per grade, every week?
2. In what situations are you *not* speaking English in the classroom, and why?
3. Does this change over time? How?
4. In what situations, do you feel that the students are *more* willing to speak?
5. In what situations, do you feel that the students are *less* willing to speak?
6. Are the students as comfortable speaking English to you as they are when speaking to each other in pairs or groups?
7. In which situations do you think that the students are interacting with each other?
8. Do you interact with the students during group activities? If so, how?
9. What activities are you using to promote English interaction in the classroom?
10. What communicative strategies are you providing the students with, to help them develop their ability to interact?

11. How much time do *you* spend on developing different communicative strategies?
12. Do the students get to choose which strategies to use when interacting?
13. Are the students involved with the “decision making” when it comes to themes and tasks?
14. What type of scaffolding are you using to help the students to develop their English interaction skills?
15. In what way do you use formative feedback to assess the students’ interactions?
16. In what way does the interaction and feedback progress as the students grow older?
17. What *implicit learning* do you think occur when the students are interacting with each other?
18. How do you use the textbook in your teaching? How does it promote interaction?
19. What do you feel are the fundamentals when planning interactive lessons?