Speech and Gender in the English as a Second Language Swedish High School Classroom: a Sociolinguistic Study.

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Abstract
Gender dominance has been the focus of research in recent years. However, this research was conducted in countries with less progressive stances towards gender equality than Sweden. This paper focuses on gender equality in the Swedish high school English as a second language classroom.

A mix of quantitative research, empirical analyses using modern technology and qualitative interviews were conducted. This approach focused upon students’ views regarding gender and speech dominance and how these views correlate with the views of the teachers. Furthermore, the quantitative amount of spoken language output was measured to confirm informants’ views about speech dominance.

Three informant groups were interviewed and observed. For a myriad of reasons, it was impossible to come to a definite conclusion regarding speech and gender equality. However, it is clear that floor-time is a vital factor for students’ learning, meaning that it is important that second language teachers are aware of the issues raised.
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1. Introduction
The male speech style in mixed-sex conversations is based upon a desire to dominate discussions and floor-time. This dominance can be seen in the results of studies conducted in 1975 by Zimmerman and West and later published in Jennifer Coates book which states that "men infringe on women’s right to speak" (Coates 2004: 115). On the other hand, female speech is based upon cooperation and is seen as subordinate to male speech, a view which is again supported by Coates: "women are concerned not to violate the man’s turn, but wait until he’s finished” (2004: 115). This leads one to believe that men speak more than women. There many studies that confirm that men talk more, and the setting where the interaction takes place rarely affects their speech amount (Coates 2004: 117).

Conversely however, women are still regarded as speaking more than men and are taught that silence is a virtue. Does the opinion that women talk more than men have any basis in reality? Or is it a socially constructed bias, which highlights the gender inequality that women face? This work aims to study these questions within the confines of the Swedish upper-secondary school, English as a second language classroom environment.

This aforementioned hypothesised socially constructed bias can be seen in much of western culture. Coates uses Spender’s explanation for the persistence of the myth of the talkative woman by suggesting that we have different expectations of male and female speakers. "Men have the right to talk, women are expected to remain silent” (2004: 118). Furthermore, English literature is rife with examples that substantiate the view that women speak more, one example is taken from Shakespeare’s As you like it when Rosalind remarks: "Do you not know i am a woman? When i think, i must speak" (Dolan 2017: 64). Similarly, children are taught and conditioned from a young age that women are more verbose. One example that shows this is in a verse of the American folk song and nursery rhyme The wheels on the bus which reads: "the mummies on the bus go chatter chatter chatter”.

Another issue that supports the latent gender bias within language, is the argument that children are raised to accept and embody certain gender roles and that language supports these roles. There are many researchers and sociolinguists who argue that language is sexist. For example, colours terms such as baby-blue and baby-pink are
associated or connected, by most people, to either boys or girls respectively as these colours terms are "gender displays or indexes" (Romaine 1999: 2) Dale Spender went so far as to associate language and patriarchy with the claim that: "language is man-made" (Romaine 1999: 3). Children are taught to "do gender" which means that gender roles are not defined by biological factors, but rather by a set of socially constructed norms which we adopt during our childhood.

A lot of research has been conducted within this field and much of it is discussed in Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language by Coates. In the book, the author discusses classroom speech dominance. She quotes David Corson who argues that: "classroom practices…reinforce and reward the competitive discursive tendencies of children while marginalising cooperative tendencies" (Coates 2004: 191). Further studies mentioned by Coates substantiate this claim; boys are portrayed as active, girls as passive and receivers of contempt and jeer when they adopt a more assertive role (Coates 2004: 191). One sixteen year old girl is quoted to have said that there are few positives aspects to being assertive, challenging an argument or participating in discussions, because the teacher thinks she is showing off and the boys jeer.

Similar studies show that teenage girls collude in male speech dominance. Sue Lees calls this phenomenon "resignation" (Lalander 2014: 178). She elaborates this phrasing and explains that teenage girls give up when faced with male dominance, or resign themselves to the view that boys’ behaviour is seen as natural and they must therefore adapt to them.

The value of floor-time in the second language classroom cannot be understated. Various studies have shown that the amount of exposure and use of the target language plays a vital role in language acquisition (Piske et al 2001: 213). Similarly, the behaviourist theory of language learning builds upon students’ exposure to and practice of the target language coupled with positive reinforcement. In addition, the interactionist or developmental perspective "hypothesize that what children need to know is essentially available in the language they are exposed to as they hear it used in thousands of hours of interaction” (Lightbown 2012: 24). Furthermore, the idea that language is learnt through practice is a major aspect of the Comprehensible Output
Hypothesis which theorizes that language is successfully acquired depending on learners producing language, both spoken and written (Lightbown 2012: 215).

It is therefore acceptable to conclude that the group that dominates the floor in the English second language classroom will have a stronger grasp of the target language. As already stated, studies claim that men are generally the dominant group in the classroom.

Figures showing the grade spread for Swedish high school graduates presented by Skolverket for the 2015/16 school year, show that female students have high end grades while the male students dominate the lower part of the grade spectrum. If the second language learning theories presented above are to be believed, then surely the female group should be the dominant group in the second language classroom.

Further studies made in various countries and cultures which are mentioned in Coates (2004) book collaborate this. However, many of these studies were conducted more than two decades ago in more conservative countries, such as the United Kingdom, or countries with a less progressive stance to gender equality than Sweden. During the years since the studies were made, countries such as the United Kingdom have become more inclusive and tolerant. However, groups such as the 2017 Social Progress Index have collected data and shown that Sweden is still a world leader in tolerance and inclusion (Social Progress Index: 2017). This raises the question whether this inequality exists in Swedish schools and whether it still persists now that women’s rights have become a more important issue in recent times.

For this study, an app called GenderEQ was used to analyse the spoken language in the observed classes. This app gave the researcher empirical data showing the gender equality of the class regarding floor-time across the genders. The app is presented and discussed further, along with its application in Section 2.3.1. The reasoning for its use however, is discussed in the following paragraphs.

At the time of the production of this study, the GenderEQ app had been available for worldwide use for approximately nine months. During this period, the total data analysed by the app worldwide had reached approximately four hundred and seventy hours spanning nearly four and a half thousand meetings. The worldwide results from the app initially seem to collaborate the common impression that women speak more than men, though only marginally; 51% female speech versus 49% male speech.
These results can be questioned however, as the average meeting analysed by the app worldwide is roughly six minutes long and the ratio of men and women in these meetings is unknown and therefore the results cannot be accurately interpreted. Similarly, the environment in which these analyses were made is unknown as cultural differences and social environment can affect the readings.

For the purposes of this study, sex will be used and classified using the binary biological definitions of the male and female sexes. It would be of further interest to conduct additional research regarding students’ sex, gender, gender roles and the effect of these factors on speech. However, the time constraints and project size restrict research into these factors.

1.2 Research Questions
Jane Sunderland, in the book *Research Methods in Linguistics* writes that research questions or hypotheses are “the key to any empirical research project” (Sunderland 2013: 9). With this in mind and the issues discussed above, the following research questions were decided upon:

- What are student perceptions regarding speech and gender in the classroom?
- How do these perceptions correlate with the teachers’ perception compared to the collected empirical data?
- What are the quantitative differences in the amount of speech produced by male and female students?
- Do the teachers reflect on the issue of how much speech is produced by male and female students respectively?
- What are possible explanations for classroom speech equality or inequality?

2. Method
2.1 Ethics, Confidentiality and Data Collection
The group that this study focused on consisted mostly of adolescents. For this reason, research ethics and morals were of utmost importance. Therefore, all informants were informed of the purpose of the study and nature of the how the GenderEQ app works. Additionally, permission to participate in classes and to analyse speech during class was obtained from the schools or teacher responsible for the class where research and data
collection was done. Similarly, all informants and interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and participated voluntarily.

Prior to each lesson, the researcher was introduced to the class. Additionally, the teacher was asked to tell the class that English was the only language to be spoken during the lesson. The teacher explained that this was so that the students could practice their spoken English and so that the students’ willingness and ability to speak their target language could be gauged, not their general willingness and ability to speak.

The informant groups and locations were chosen out of convenience as these are teachers or schools with which the researcher has, or has had a prior relationship. More details regarding data collection and interviews are presented in sections 2.2-2.4.

2.2 Qualitative, Quantitative or Both?
The research questions that this study builds upon, require that the researcher conducts interviews with students as well as teachers. In this manner, the researcher is able to discover their perceptions of speech and gender within the classroom. Parallel to these interviews, empirical data needed to be collected so that non-biased data could be presented to compare with informants’ perceptions and the accuracy and validity of previously collected data.

Martyn Denscombe (2010) discusses the benefits of using a mixed method research approach in his book *The Good Research Guide: For small-Scale social Research Projects*. As already stated, this study will employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The following paragraphs will discuss the reasoning behind the decision to use a mixed research approach.

Denscombe presents three main reasons why mixed methods are a valuable strategy. Firstly, the accuracy and validity of findings can be confirmed. Secondly, any biases in research methods can be found. And thirdly, research instruments and tools can be tested and further developed (2010: 140).

A positive factor to this mixed method approach is that “researchers can improve their confidence in the accuracy of findings through the use of different methods” (2010: 139) Considering that much of the research in this study is built upon informants’ perceptions of events coupled with data analysis from a device that has inherent weaknesses, it is important that the researcher can check findings against other findings from other research methods to maximise the accuracy of the study. Similarly,
the participating researcher’s own gender may distort the research because of the Observer’s Paradox, which states that the target group may change their behaviour as a result of the researcher’s presence (Labov 2011: 209). Additionally, the study can be seen as a test-bed for the use of the GenderEQ app in similar studies made in the future. Furthermore, this approach gives direct benefits to painting a more complete picture, and it develops the analysis and gives a wider spread of samples (Denscombe 2010: 144).

2.2.1 Qualitative interview
Nigel Edley and Lita Litosseliti, in the book *Research Methods in Linguistics*, describe the western world as "interview societies" (Edley & Litosseliti 2013: 155). With this phrase, they mean that western cultures are very familiar with interviews, as most people have either participated in, read or seen an interview. This familiarity is an asset for researchers, as most interviewees will feel more comfortable in participating in an interview than in one of the less familiar research methods; focus groups for example.

Focus groups were considered for this study, as time constraints could be addressed and work schedules could be easily matched if the informants could be gathered simultaneously, thereby streamlining the data collection. It was however decided that this method would not be used. Firstly, as the questions asked did not require explicit factual answers, but rather the interviewee’s own impressions of classroom behavior, it was decided that one-on-one interviews were better suited to the task.

Furthermore, focus group participants may place pressure on or influence each other’s answers, thereby providing faulty data. They may give an answer that they believe is correct or even ”speak on behalf of whatever group or category of person that is the focus of the researcher’s interest” (Edley & Litosseliti 2013: 161). These factors also influenced the researcher’s decision to hold individual phenomenological interviews with the teachers of the observed classes. The reason for this was that it was felt that some teachers may feel uncomfortable discussing their teaching methods and gender-biases in a group and therefore give false answers.

The interviews held for this study were deliberately made to feel relaxed by deviating from the structured interview style, and used a semi-structured interview style featuring open questions and improvised follow up questions which also helped to avoid
misunderstandings which can easily "accrue when interviewers adhere strictly to a fixed schedule of questions" (Edley & Litosseliti 2013: 159). These factors were implemented to help elicit honest answers, and to ensure that the interviewees did not feel interrogated. Furthermore, in this manner the researcher strived to avoid the phenomenon where interviewees attempt to assume characters which cast themselves in a better light (Edley & Litosseliti 2013: 157).

2.2.2 Student Informants
When studying gender equality in the Swedish classroom, it would be ludicrous to ignore the opinions and perceptions of the students themselves. The aim of the data collection which focused on the students was to discover their perceptions, both as a group and a select few individuals. With this in mind, every student in the observed classes was given a questionnaire, a translated example of which can be found in Appendix 1.

The following sections will discuss the reasoning behind and thoughts regarding the inclusion of each question. To guarantee the quality of the answers, the questionnaire was explained to class and written in Swedish.

Question 1: Are you biologically male or female?
This question focuses on the student’s own gender, as when discussing and researching gender bias, the informant’s gender must be taken into account. As this factor may affect their perception of speech and floor-time.

Question 2: Which group answers more questions, boys or girls?
For this question, the students were instructed to roughly mark on a line how many percent of the questions asked during the lesson were answered by their own gender group. This question aimed at gauging the student’s perception of their gender’s participation in the lesson.

Question 3. Which gender group has more questions directed at them, boys or girls?
This question was included so that the informants could share their perceptions of the teacher’s gender bias. For this question, the students were instructed to roughly
mark on a line how many percent of the questions asked during the lesson were directed at their own gender group.

Question 4. In the classroom which group speaks more, boys or girls?

This question is a general question to the students regarding when the floor is free, which gender is perceived to dominate? For this question, the students were asked to gauge how the total amount of speech during the lesson was divided between the two genders.

Question 5. When during school hours are the noise levels highest?

This question was included to gauge whether the students spoke more during certain times of the day. The students were asked to circle which one of the three possible answers (During the morning, middle of the day or last few hours) was most accurate.

Along with the quantitative questionnaires, volunteer students were asked to participate in short interviews where they were allowed to further express their opinions and the researcher was able to ask follow-up questions regarding the questionnaire. In this manner any phenomenon and issues not mentioned earlier in the questionnaire could be ventilated by the students and investigated further by the researcher. The opportunity to expand on the questionnaire afforded by the interviews allowed for the shortness of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the short length of the questionnaire was implemented to ensure that the students had time to answer the questions before needing to leave for their next class or activity.

2.2.3 Teacher Informants
Similar to the students' opinions and perceptions of the equality in the classroom, the teacher must also be taken into account. As it is the teacher that must control the floor-time and can therefore dictate who receives more floor-time and if the received floor-time affects the students' perception regarding speech in the classroom. The teachers were asked to answer similar questions to those directed at the students with some slight changes. A translated copy of the teacher questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.
Question 1. Which gender do you identify with?

Similar to the question directed at the students, the teacher’s gender affects their perceptions of speech in the classroom as social gender bias can affect their perception of floor-time and speech dominance in a similar way to students’ perceptions.

Question 2. Please mark your relevant age bracket: under 20 / 21-30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / 50+.

The teachers were not required to give their exact age. However, the manner in which a teacher perceives their students and how they interact varies depending on their age gap and can therefore be of interest for this study. Studies conducted in 1990 by Dale Spender found that most teachers gave roughly two-thirds of their attention to boys. Is this still a reality or have classrooms become more equal and does the teacher’s age affect this?

Question 3. Which gender group is more willing to answer questions? The boys or girls?

Many teachers may find it hard to admit that they prefer to direct questions to either male or female students. This question was further discussed during the qualitative interviews and is connected to the studies mentioned in section 1.

Question 4. During class, which group speaks more, boys or girls?

In the classroom, which group speaks more, boys or girls? This question is a general question to the teacher to gauge which gender group is more "talkative". Does the teacher’s perceptions correlate with the empirical data gathered and the gender group that has the majority of questions directed at them?
2.3 Empirical Research

2.3.1. GenderEQ App

For this study, a smartphone app called GenderEQ was used to collect the empirical data regarding speech in the classroom. The following section will discuss this app and its use.

On March 8th in 2017, the telephone app GenderEQ was released by the Doberman design firm. Lars Ericsson, head of technology at Doberman said that the main aim of the app was to “use an emerging technology and apply it to real problems” (Press release GenderEQ), namely gender equality in the meeting room. The uses of the app can however be applied to many places, including the classroom.

The practical functions of the app are extremely easy and simplistic. Once the app is activated, it continuously analyses the audio data and continuously visualizes the equality in the speaking environment and presents a real-time result in percentages, showing the division between both genders and their amount of speech. Once the app is deactivated, a graph based report is presented to the participants or data collector which shows the proportion of floor-time given to both genders during the meeting or analysed time period.

The GenderEq app is chiefly designed to be used during meetings, or similar situations where generally only one speaker speaks at a time. However, in a classroom environment many speakers may speak simultaneously which can affect the data collection as the app cannot distinguish between the various speakers. This became apparent during the research, as the multitude of active voices during the lessons influenced the results gained from the app. Furthermore, the social groups within the classroom population create areas dominated by one gender and this factor could also affect the data collection if the device was placed too near any of these groups. To counter this, up to five devices were placed in various positions within the classroom and an average between these devices was used for the final result.

Another factor that affected the data collection was the pitch of the speaker’s voice. GenderEQ is not a fool proof analytical tool. Lars Ericsson said during the release of the app that it "is a tool used to highlight an important issue" (Press release GenderEQ) but does not solve the problem. In other words, it should be used to initiate discussions regarding gender equality, not to be used as proof to support a claim.
Despite this, the app functioned well considering the budget and time constraints laid upon this study.

This lack of exact accuracy became apparent as a result of the choice in target group. The target group, Swedish upper secondary school students, were in various stages of puberty during the study and their voices were changing as a result of this biological process. For example, many male speakers had high pitched voices which the app recognised as female. Therefore, the results could not be presented as exact, but gave a general idea of the balance within the classroom. It is because of this influence that the study focused on all three year groups within Swedish upper secondary schools, as the effects of puberty upon the speakers’ voices lessened in the older groups.

The choice to use GenderEQ was made partly because it is available to anyone free of charge but also as the app does not record any voices. Consequently, no record of particular participants exists so each informant remains anonymous and any utterances they made were not saved or official.

### 2.3.2 Practical Implementation of Analysis Devices

As already mentioned, the GenderEQ app has some weaknesses when used in a classroom environment. Namely, the large amount of interacting voices makes it hard for the app to function accurately. Also, in areas where one gender is dominant the data can become altered by this gender imbalance.

To address these weaknesses, a total of five analysis devices were placed at various positions in the classroom. One device was placed near to where the teacher spent the majority of the lesson time; on the teacher’s desk, close to the whiteboard. It was deemed impossible for the teacher to carry the device on them, as occupying one hand could hamper their work, while carrying it in their pocket or clothing would disrupt the efficiency of the device. Four other devices were spread equal distances apart from each in the corners of the classroom as close to the student groups as possible. In some cases, the classroom was split into a number of table groups in which case a device was placed on each table.

After each analysis period, the results were compiled and an average for the room was calculated. Along with this average score, the gender ratio of the class was recorded as a possible explanation for the analysis result.
2.3.3 Classroom interaction and composition
Simultaneously to the data analysis, quantitative and qualitative research observations on classroom interactions were made by the researcher. Factors such as which gender group had more questions directed at them and which gender group was interrupted more were gauged. Additionally, the composition of the class was established to allow for easier assessment of speech dominance in the class, if either gender was in the majority.

3. Results
3.1 Class 1
During this study, three English as a second language classes were observed. The first class consisted of thirteen boys and seventeen girls who were studying their second year at high school.

The class gauged that 60% of questions answered during the lesson were answered by the boys, and that the boys had more questions aimed at them. This was further collaborated by the researcher, who observed that eight out of twelve questions were aimed at and answered by the male students. However, the questionnaire results showed that the majority of the class thought that the girls spoke more. However, this can be linked to the time of day. The observed lesson was the first lesson of the day and the class consensus was that girls generally spoke more than the boys during the early hours of the school day.

The qualitative interviews provided some additional insight. The students felt that the reason that the male students received more questions was that the boys were deemed stronger English speakers and that the teacher wanted the class to quickly get to work with the task at hand. It is believed that he asked those students he felt could quickly answer the question correctly in an effort to save lesson time. Furthermore, the teacher often asked the same student follow-up questions, which also affected the statistics. The interviewed group also thought that the girls spoke more during the early hours of the school day. The reasons for this varied heavily; from some students not being so-called morning people, to students eating insufficient or non nutritional breakfasts.

The teacher was male, aged between forty-one and fifty. His opinion of the class was that the overall willingness to answer questions was equal across genders.
However, he felt that the girls in the class were more talkative and the boys generally worked quietly. On the other hand, the male students caused more disruptions; often dropping things or yawning loudly for example. These acts are distracting for the class. On the other hand, the more talkative girls were not as distracting. They held, what the teacher called, ”more civilized conversation”.

The teacher agreed with many of the views expressed by the students in the qualitative interview. He agreed with the students and was not surprised when he was told that he targeted his questions at specific students. However, it was not done in an attempt to save time. The questions were aimed at specific students as the topic of the question was specific to the mistakes, or issues that that individual student often makes or needs to address in future work.

The GenderEQ app collaborated these opinions. The total score for the class showed that the floor-time in the class was in the boys’ favour, a total of seventy-five percent. However, this score was mostly achieved during the first quarter of the lesson where the male teacher’s voice dominated. Additionally, the eight questions answered by the boys at the start of the lesson also pushed the results in their favour. However, as the lesson progressed and the students became more involved in their individual work, the talkativeness of the girls pushed back the result.

3.2 Class 2
Similar to Class 1, this lesson was composed of second year high school students. This class was smaller and had a more even gender population; fourteen boys and thirteen girls. In this class, the students gauged that the boys answered sixty-six percent of the questions asked. However, they felt that the girls had more questions directed at them. Because of the nature of the goals of the lesson, very few questions were asked; a total of five, of which two were targeted at the boys. The consensus of the class was that the boys generally spoke more and, similarly to Class 1, they felt that the girls spoke more during the early hours of the school day.

Again, the qualitative interview gave many reasons for the students’ willingness to speak. Similar to Class 1, the students in this class felt that their energy levels in the morning was a major factor. Many students also mentioned the subject matter to be of varying interest and thus they feel more or less obliged to speak during lessons.
Furthermore, no students in the questioned group felt that their competence in English affects their willingness to speak.

The teacher was younger than the teacher of Class 1, who was a male in the thirty-one to forty bracket. He felt that the boys were more talkative and more willing to answer questions. He agreed with the student informants that their willingness to speak is dependent on the subject matter of the lesson, saying that boys show no interest in typical female topics, while the girls can adapt better. He added that the subject for the current assignment of the class was chosen as it is non-gender specific, namely writing an advert for a country or holiday location to feature in a fictional tourism magazine.

The results from the GenderEq app showed a male dominance of fifty-five percent. Again, the majority of speech during the observation period was during the start of the lesson when the teacher explained the class goals and handed out graded homework. However the results shifted dramatically as the girls had many questions regarding the grades they had received for their homework. The teacher often had to ask the boys not to talk in Swedish, but to either follow the lesson directives, which were to speak English or work in silence instead.

### 3.3 Class 3

Unfortunately, because of the class’ busy school schedule, no qualitative interviews were held with this group. This class consisted of third year high school students, where the girls were the dominant group; seventeen girls and eleven boys. The consensus of the class was that seventy percent of questions were answered by the girls and that they also had more questions targeted at them. The researcher’s observations also collaborates this, as twenty-two of thirty-one questions were directed at the girls. Unlike the other classes that were observed, this class felt that there was no shift in speech dominance during the day, that boys spoke more all day and are generally the more talkative group.

Also, unlike the other two classes the teacher of this class was female, and the youngest of the observed teachers, aged between twenty-one and thirty. She felt that the girls were more willing to answer questions and spoke more. However, similar to the teacher of Class 1 she also felt that boys were noisier and were more prone to interrupt other speakers or cause similar distractions to those described by the teacher of Class 1.
The GenderEQ app confirmed her observations, as female speech dominated the lesson. Eighty-two percent of speech during the lesson was female and it was more consistent for the duration of the analysis period than in the two other observed lessons.

4. Discussion
As forecast in both the introduction and results sections, there are inherent problems with conducting this kind of study. Some of these aspects became apparent while collecting the data. Firstly, the time constraints imposed upon the study together with the teachers’ and students’ busy school schedules limited the available time for data collection. Therefore, the number of interviews and empirical collected data was limited. This became most apparent when there was no chance to interview students from Class 3, as they were required to go to their next lesson.

Another factor which should be mentioned is that a lot of the studies that this work takes inspiration from were conducted many years ago, over long periods of time and collected data from many different social situations and environments. This work, however, was constrained to only a few weeks with too few and restricted opportunities to conduct observations.

As stated above, the opportunities to conduct observations were restricted. The schools where research was conducted limited the amount of time that the researcher was allowed to spend at the schools. Unfortunately, during the time period in which the research was conducted, the schools were nearing the end of the autumn term and the teachers were busy grading students. Additionally, the students’ school projects were nearing their deadlines during this period, and they were required to focus on their work, which limited the speech produced during the lesson. Furthermore, it was deemed by the schools that conducting research in the classes could distract students from their work. Consequently, any researcher conducting similar research in the future should attempt to do so during another time in the school calendar.

Another aspect of the problems set upon the research, as a result of the busy school period, became apparent as the qualitative interviews became rushed meetings between lessons. This resulted in the interviews being very short, hence both students’ and teachers’ opinions and thoughts were not adequately expanded upon.

Similarly, being a subject of gender equality research is, for many, a sensitive issue. This became apparent as the informant teachers were uncomfortable discussing
the floor-time equality in their classes, possibly because of a fear of being labelled as a sexist or discriminatory in other ways. Similarly, the presence of the researcher and their observation of classroom practices can change the teachers' behaviour in class. The result of this may be similar to that of the Hawthorne Effect or Observer’s Paradox which were discussed in section 1.2. These theories state that research participants change their behaviour as a result of being observed. Furthermore, all teachers that were interviewed said that their students were unusually quiet during the observation periods, again possible proof of the effects of the Observer’s Paradox or Hawthorn Effect. It can be theorized that the aforementioned changes in student and teacher behaviour, that come as a result of the researcher’s presence could be negated if the participants had been allowed more time to familiarize themselves with the researcher over a longer period of time, instead of the one-off event that was the case during these observations.

Another factor that may have affected the language output of the students was the lesson format, as all three classes were working on written texts which limited language output. However, in order to promote speech, the classes were allowed to speak freely with each other, albeit in the target language. Coates discusses that different contexts for language production elicit different levels of participation from both genders, and consequently how they are viewed by their teacher and peers (2004: 196). It is therefore possible that the dominance of either gender had become clearer if the lessons had focused upon class discussions or been seminar style lessons. These lesson styles, according to Coates, favour male competitive nature and "testifies the male-centered culture" (2004: 196)

Furthermore, the behavioural norms and youth cultures inherent in each school class similarly affect the observations. An example of these norms, and cultural aspects that can possibly affect the observations, is mentioned by Coates, who claims that male students today see "working hard academically… as seriously uncool" (2011: 207). Therefore, their performance and effort in class can be lessened because of their desire to appear "cooler" in the eyes of their friends.

Another factor that was not focused upon in this study was the students’ choice in high school subject direction. The choice in school subject orientation affects the social pressures imposed upon students. The stereotypical behaviour of an arts student differs from the behavioural patterns of a stereotypical natural sciences students, for
example. Coates also writes, that the subject matter in the lesson affects students’
williness to participate: "Boys will object - loudly - to topics they see as
effeminate" (2011: 194). Coates also cites Spender who found that "girls felt very
uncomfortable at being forced to assert themselves in a mixed class" (2011: 194).
Therefore, the observed students’ willingness to participate and partake in conversation
in the class could possibly be altered by the subject matter of the lesson, a factor which
was not actively taken into account during the observations.

However, certain conclusions can nonetheless be drawn from the acquired
results. Considering that the results gained from the app matched the researcher’s own
observations of the analysis periods, the GenderEq app can be deemed as a suitable tool
for this kind of study, even if it was not designed to be used in a classroom setting.
However, any future studies may wish to incorporate decibel-meters as people’s
perceptions of speech dominance can be affected by the volume with which a speaker
talks, not only the amount of produced speech. This is a factor that can be witnessed in
many of the statements of the observed groups: that boys are noisier and in other ways
created loud distractions.

Further conclusions that can be made and theories that can be supported can be
seen in all the observed classes. Class 1 for example, is an example of the teacher
"colluding in boys’ dominance" (Coates 2011: 193), as the teacher asked the boys in the
class the majority of questions during critical periods when an answer was needed. The
possible reasoning behind the teacher’s targeting of questions to certain students differs
between the students themselves and the teacher, and cannot be accurately assessed by
the researcher. Either the students are correct and the teacher wished to save lesson
time, thus leading to the assumption that the teacher was inadvertantly colluding with
the male students, by targeting them at a critical period. Or the teacher was honest and
wished to address issues with a specific student’s second language production.
Alternatively, the answers given by the informants can be connected once again to the
Observer’s Paradox or as a result of informants giving the answer that they perceive is
correct, as mentioned by Edley (2013). In any case, it was only once the floor was open
and the teacher was not directing the conversation that the girls began to speak and
properly affect the GenderEQ readings.
Similarly, Edley’s theory that informants can answer in a manner they feel is correct instead of giving a truly honest answer can explain the opinion of the students in Class 2; that their own competence in the target language was not an obstacle in their language production. On the other hand, it can be argued that this answer was given in case the students believed that the teacher was being assessed, and in that case wanted to praise the teacher’s competence or the positive atmosphere the teacher has created in their classroom.

However, Class 2 strengthened the argument put forth by Coates (2011) that subject matter directly affects the level of participation by students. This was further agreed upon by the teacher who actively aimed at giving his students tasks that are as gender neutral as possible. In the case of Class 2, the subject matter was adequately gender neutral and neither gender was forced to adapt.

In Coates’ book, she addresses a 2003 study conducted by Pauline Hunt at Cambridge University. She found that female students asked more questions and advanced more carefully than their male colleagues (2011, 196). This can possibly be witnessed in the female students’ questions regarding previous homework during the observations conducted in Class 3. Furthermore, Class 3 was possibly the most gender equal of the observed classes. The girls represented roughly two-thirds of the class, and as a result had just over two-thirds of questions targeted at them. The disproportionate amount of speech created by the female population in the classroom can be attributed to the teacher being the main active speaker, directing and controlling the conversations in the classroom.

As already stated many factors influenced the GenderEQ readings, resulting in no accurate conclusions. However, in an ideal world accurate conclusions could possibly be drawn. For this to be possible, three specific classes would be observed over a long period of time and at various times during the school day. One of these classes would act as a control group, consisting of an equal number of female and male students. The remaining two classes would not be equal in their gender groups. One class would consist of more female students, while the other would have a male student majority.

The teacher’s influence on the class’ behaviour would be countered by the class having either two teachers, one male and one female, simultaneously. Another
alternative, would be repeating the observation period with the same classes, but with a
teacher of the opposite gender of the teacher of the initial period. Furthermore, it would
be ideal to have more control over the subject matter of the observed lessons.
Preferably, the students would be involved in lessons that enticed or forced them to
produce more language, such as discussion based lessons.

5. Conclusion
There are far too many factors to consider when attempting to find a fair assessment
regarding which gender dominates speech in the English as a second language
classroom in Sweden. These factors all affect the language output and gender equality in
the classroom. However, certain conclusions can nonetheless be made concerning the
research questions outlined in section 1.2. Male high school students are generally the
more talkative gender group according to the students in the study. Also, students rarely
reflect over classroom floor-time equality.

The students’ views were generally shared by the teacher and again collaborated
by the GenderEQ app; boys generally speak more, except in certain situations, such as
when the female group outnumber the male group. In these situations the male group
often takes a more passive role. Regarding the quantitative difference in the amount of
speech produced by male and female students, the data collected showed that boys
spoke less than the girls, yet only marginally. An average of the three lessons’ results
was calculated and male speech accounted for 49.3% of the total spoken language
output. This figure matches that of the international results gathered by the GenderEQ
app. However, more data must be collected and analysed for a more accurate result to
be given. It is also clear that teachers reflect on the issue of speech production,
especially in the second language environment, as they are aware that language is best
acquired through practicing the target language. Therefore, they attempt to allow each
student an equal opportunity to produce the language.

This subject is an extremely interesting issue to study, but the myriad of factors
that change classroom dynamics make it impossible to form any clear conclusions.
Despite this, the most important issue that can be raised from this study is an awareness
of the importance of classroom speech equality, and that it is affected by many factors
outside of the teacher’s control and that it directly has an affect on students’ second
language acquisition. Furthermore, teachers should be aware of and strive to adapt to an
inherent gender imbalance in today's society, an imbalance which many believe is
created and strengthened in the classroom environment.

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*Press Release GenderEQ*: Online 2017

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Appendix
Appendix 1: Student Questionnaire

1. Are you biologically male or female?

2. Which group answers more questions, boys or girls?
   Mark on the line.
   0% ——————————————————————— 100%

3. Which gender group has more questions directed at them, boys or girls?
   Mark on the line.
   0% ——————————————————————— 100%

4. In the classroom which group speaks more, boys or girls?
   Mark on the line.
   Male % —————————————————————— Female %

5. When during school hours are the noise levels highest?
   During the morning // Middle of the day // The last few hours.

Appendix 2: Teacher Questionnaire

1. Which gender do you identify with?

2. Please mark your relevant age bracket: under 20 / 21-30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / 50+.

3. Which gender group is more willing to answer questions? The boys or girls?

4. During class, which group speaks more, boys or girls?