Opening a Global Door –
Methodologies in successful instruction of English as a second language for early learners

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Abstract

English is a widely used language, and its standing as a tool for communication among people who do not share a common first language is ever increasing. Young students all over the globe therefore learn English in school. This study aims to investigate what some recent research says regarding what methods to use when teaching young learners a second language. It then aims to compare the research findings to the methods English teachers of young learners in four elementary schools in the southern Norrland area of Sweden employ in their instruction. The study was conducted through observations and interviews with participating teachers.

It was found that research advocates that teachers should use English frequently and in great quantities during lessons with young learners. Teachers should also vary their instruction and use different avenues to make the language accessible to students (for example through course-books and through active learning situations such as stories, songs, physical activities, and drama). The results of the study show that teachers attempt to employ the methods that research advocates, but that difficulties arise in regards to the teachers’ familiarity with the language, their self-confidence as teachers, and a lack of space, time, and material.

Keywords: English, second language, foreign language, methodologies, English didactics, language learning, language instruction
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APPENDICES
1 Introduction

English is a well-known global language with widespread use, and its importance increases as the world around us becomes ever more international. It is a language used in movies, books, and music, on the Internet, in computer games, during travel, for business transactions, in politics, and for communication between people all over the world for a variety of reasons.

Harmer (2007) explains in his book *The Practice of English Language Teaching* that English has become a “genuine lingua franca” (p. 13), meaning that it is a language used for communication worldwide by people who do not share a common first language. In *English: One Tongue, Many Voices*, Svartvik and Leech (2006) state that English holds the number one position as an avenue for international communication, and note that worldwide, English is currently the most frequently taught foreign language (p. 1). They see no indication that this fact will change in the foreseeable future (p. 246). Cook (2008), in his book *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*, stresses that facilitating students’ second language learning is a vital responsibility for teachers of the twenty-first century (p. 1). In her pamphlet, *English During the Early School Years: Theories, Discussions, and Ideas*, Lindström (1998) even argues that in many ways, knowing a second language is a basic human right since it enables communication with others (pp. 15-16). Simply put, it is essential that children of today are taught how to use the English language and that they become confident in their ability to do so.

How, when, and why children should learn a second language are issues that have long been debated (see for example: Harmer 2007, p. 50; Lundberg 2007, p. 28; Pinter 2006, p. 27). Several authors (Keaveney & Lundberg 2014, p. 12; Lindström 1998, pp. 18-19; Pinter 2006, p. 29) acknowledge that there is no absolute proof that young age benefits second language learning, but also disclose that most research still indicates that initiating second language learning at a young age has advantages over starting later in life. Advantages include better pronunciation and a more open mind-set that allows students to be less self-conscious about speaking the language. Above all though, they point to the fact that starting second language learning early allows students more time to learn the language, which leads to better proficiency (ibid.). Lindström (1998) notes that objections to early second language learning include arguments that children need to become proficient in their mother tongue before learning a second language, and theories that state that learning a second language too early could have a negative impact on the development of the mother tongue (pp. 6, 17). However, Lindström argues against these concerns and explains that early language learning actually affects students in a positive way by preparing them both linguistically, culturally, and mentally for further language studies later in life. It helps them develop a linguistic awareness that benefits them in all aspects of language learning, whether it be in first, second, or third language learning alike (p. 19).

In order to develop this linguistic awareness, Lindström (1998) stresses that it is important to employ special methods when teaching English to young learners (p. 20). Harmer (2007) also emphasizes the fact that a student’s age greatly should affect the teacher’s decision regarding content and method of instruction. He points out that students have different needs and abilities that vary according to their age (p. 81). This essay will therefore summarize what some recent research says regarding what methods to use when teaching young learners a second language. It will also investigate what the current Swedish school policy documents
state regarding the subject of English in the early school years. The research will then be juxtaposed with teacher interviews and observations, with the aim of investigating what methodology is used today when teaching English in the early school years in four Swedish elementary schools in the area of southern Norrland. This essay will focus on the following research questions:

- What does research say are some effective methods to use in teaching young students a second language?
- What methods do English teachers of young learners in four elementary schools in southern Norrland employ in their instruction?
- Do the teachers’ methods correspond to the research findings?

2 Background

In the background, information will first be presented concerning what the current Swedish curriculum states regarding the guidelines for the subject of English in the early school years. This information will be presented under the heading Goals of English instruction for young learners. Following that, some recent research will be summarized in regards to what methods are suggested when teaching young learners a second language. The research will be presented under the heading Methodologies in early second language instruction, with subheadings Using the target language during lessons and Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility.

2.1 Goals of English instruction for young learners

The current curriculum, The Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the recreation centre 2011, also known as Lgr 11, was adopted in 2011. The Swedish National Agency for Education (hereinafter called SNAE), known as Skolverket in Swedish, discloses in the Commentary Material for the Syllabus in English that the syllabus for English in Lgr 11 was constructed according to the guidelines of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and is strongly influenced by a communicative view of language learning (Skolverket 2011b, p. 6). The syllabus specifically states that “Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills” (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32).

SNAE further notes that the syllabus emphasizes the importance of making use of the language in the world around students, for example via various media, in order to increase both student motivation and learning through authentic and interesting situations (Skolverket 2011b, p. 6). In fact, Lgr 11 stresses that “pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests” (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32).

Although SNAE emphasizes the fact that research shows that effective language learning is best achieved through communication and not by focusing on the individual components of language, they also remark that Lgr 11 states that students over time shall improve their communicative ability by gradually increasing their mastery of the language’s form and structure by working on areas such as spelling, pronunciation, and grammar (Skolverket 2011b, p. 6). In addition, Lgr 11 also emphasizes that English instruction should aim to “encourage
pupils to develop an interest in languages and culture, and convey the benefits of language skills and knowledge” (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32).

In other words, Lgr 11 puts emphasis on cultivating students’ lifelong interest in the language learning process while helping them develop their communicative competency through knowledge of the language structure. For this reason, Lindström (1998) states that English lessons for young learners should focus on fostering a curiosity for the language as well as a desire to learn. That is to say, early instruction should aim to create a positive attitude to further language studies (p. 20). Porras González (2010) agrees in her article *Teaching English through Stories: A Meaningful and Fun Way for Children to Learn the Language*, and recommends that lessons be formed in such a way that learning the language becomes exciting and important to young students (p. 105). Hence, Lindström stresses that instruction for early language learners has to have special methodology to help students experience and discover the language (p. 20).

### 2.2 Methodologies in early second language instruction

Focusing on the special methodology that, among others, Lindström (1998, p. 20) advocates for teaching young learners a second language, the study indicates two recurring methodological aspects that recent research recommends. The following overview (*figure 1*) summarizes these methodologies which will be further presented below, under the headings *Using the target language during lessons* and *Utilizing various avenues to accessibility*.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

*Figure 1, Overview of two methodologies in early second language instruction.*

#### 2.2.1 Using the target language during lessons

The first method that research advocates to facilitate second language learning among young learners, is to make use of the target language during lessons (in this essay, *target language* specifically refers to English). Several authors stress that in order to learn a second language well, students need frequent exposure over time to the target language (Börjesson 2012, p. 14; Harmer 2007, p. 56; Lightbown & Spada 2013, p. 69; Lindström 1998, pp. 18, 32; Lundberg 2007, p. 110).

#### 2.2.1.1 Quantity of target language exposure

The need to expose students to the target language leads to a discussion regarding whether to use the target language exclusively in the classroom or whether to instruct the second language
using the mother tongue. Harmer (2007) states that there has long been a general consensus favoring the exclusive use of the target language in the second language classroom. However, he notes that this method is now being questioned by methodologists and explains that a discussion focusing on when and how to use the target language has of late taken place (p. 132).

In his book Sociolinguistics, Einarsson (2009) emphasizes that learning a foreign language takes a great deal of time (p. 96). Harmer (2007) also stresses the matter of time (p. 394), and shows that building instruction around the absolute use of the target language therefore has its benefits. For example, he mentions that students who are routinely exposed to the target language may be motivated to increase their own use of it (p. 132). Börjesson (2012) expresses a similar opinion in SNAE’s publication Regarding Strategies in English and Modern Languages, and writes that research has proven that teachers who use the target language extensively in the classroom have students whose second language usage increases as well (p. 14). She also notes that increasing the amount of time during lessons that is dedicated to the target language will improve students’ knowledge of vocabulary in an authentic way, contributing to increased learning (p. 9). Similarly, Lundberg (2007) states in her licentiate thesis Teachers in Action – Exploring strategies to improve the teaching and learning of English in the early school years, that if teachers spend a substantial amount of time using the target language habitually in the classroom, students’ learning, as well as their use of the target language, will increase (pp. 110-112).

In her book English During the Early Years, Lundberg (2011) further argues that the common practice of teachers translating the target language into the mother tongue for students to be able to understand, should be avoided when instructing young learners. She says that translation actually counteracts language learning and robs students of the opportunity to develop their listening skills. Through translation, students also do not get the chance to develop their understanding of the language by inferring (p. 76). In his paper The Changing Face of Listening, Field (2002) also emphasizes that students of a second language must be faced with the challenge of not understanding everything that is said in order to grow and learn (p. 244). He argues that students are benefitted by having to figure matters out on their own and states that: “the teacher [must have] a much less interventionist role, encouraging learners to listen and relisten and to do as much of the work as possible for themselves” (p. 247).

Another reason to conduct lessons using the target language only is, says Harmer (2007), that it will benefit those students who have a different mother tongue (p. 132). Lindström (1998) comments on the same issue and argues that teaching English by way of Swedish as an instructional language, creates an obstacle for those who are not already proficient in Swedish. If English is used as the instructional language, Lindström proclaims that all students, regardless of mother tongue, have the same conditions and possibilities to learn the language (pp. 21, 32).

Lundberg (2007) acknowledges that it can be difficult for teachers and students alike to work mainly with the target language, but claims that it is simply a matter of getting used to this technique. She suggests that, to make the transition easier, the teacher may need to use body language, gestures, mimicry, and other means of clarification, if the students find the sole use of the target language difficult (p. 110). Harmer (2007) similarly notes that it is beneficial to the students’ understanding of the target language if the teacher demonstrates the meaning of the words by miming or employing explanatory gestures (p. 116), a practice that Lundberg (2011) also endorses (p. 77). Instead of translating a word like tall, the teacher can demonstrate
it by showing what *tall* means (Harmer 2007, p. 116). Harmer and Lundberg are joined in this opinion by Cabrera and Martinez (2001) in their report *The Effects of Repetition, Comprehension Checks, and Gestures on Primary School Children in an EFL Situation*. Their research shows that gestures and body language are invaluable tools for teachers to use in second language instruction. They contend that if teachers use gestures, students are aided in understanding the language they hear (pp. 286-287). Similar thoughts are voiced by Lindström (1998) who states that the teacher’s actions, mimicry, gestures, and tone of voice all are of great importance for beginning learners’ successful second language acquisition (pp. 31, 33).

### 2.2.1.2 Frequency, repetition, and authenticity of target language exposure

In addition to considering how much of the target language to expose students to, teachers must also consider how often to incorporate the language in lessons. Harmer (2007) explains that meeting the language repeatedly at regular intervals enhances students’ ability to learn (p. 56). His thoughts are echoed by Lundberg (2007) who writes that young learners preferably should be exposed to the second language every day in order to facilitate learning (p. 95). Instead of a few, long lessons each week, Lundberg advocates several, shorter lessons (p. 130). She warns that lessons that are too long are counterproductive because young students tend to get tired and lose focus after a short while, negatively affecting the quality of the lessons (pp. 124, 131).

Another reason Lundberg (2007) prefers numerous, shorter lessons, is because she emphasizes that frequent repetition is beneficial in second language learning (p. 131). Her thoughts are shared by Lindström (1998, p. 33), Cabrera and Martinez (2001, p. 287), and by Saloma Madriñan (2014) who in her in her article *The Use of First Language in the Second-Language Classroom: A Support for Second Language Acquisition*, notes that repetition aids in developing an understanding of a second language (p. 62). Harmer (2007) makes the same observations and states that repetition is an important part of learning a language although he cautions that to be of use, repetition must be performed attentively. Mindless repetition does not automatically enhance students’ knowledge of a language (p. 78). Nevertheless, Harmer says that repetition performed properly makes students more comfortable with the language (p. 346). Lundberg is of the same opinion and points out that repetition gives students something familiar to work with, making them feel competent and secure of their second language learning. Attentive repetition, she claims, therefore stimulates both the desire to learn and the commitment to do so (p. 94). In fact, Lundberg argues that the need young students have of frequent repetition is greater than what many teachers believe; even more so if English is not a frequently occurring subject on the schedule (pp. 94-95).

Lindström (1998) acknowledges that achieving both ample exposure to, and frequent repetition of, the language can be difficult since the amount of time on the schedule dedicated to English instruction often is rather limited (p. 22). A way to circumvent this problem is to incorporate English into *all* aspects of the school day (Lindström 1998, p. 18; Lundberg 2007, p. 103). Lundberg (2007) emphasizes that English does not have to be kept as a separate subject but may advantageously be incorporated into other subjects as well, such as mathematics, social studies, art, physical education, etcetera (p. 103). By integrating English into other parts of the day, repetition happens naturally and the English language becomes an innate and authentic communication tool for students, Lundberg (2007, p. 104) says. This authenticity, she stresses,
is beneficial since the curriculum states that English instruction should focus on authentic subjects in a communicative classroom climate (p. 135).

There are, however, also critics to such an approach to second language learning. Darn (2006) argues in his text, *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): A European Overview*, that “Even if English remains the lingua franca, individual countries cannot be expected to relegate their own languages to second place” (p. 1), and Sylvén (2013) states in her article *CLIL in Sweden – why does it not work? A metaperspective on CLIL across contexts in Europe*, that incorporating English into other subjects actually has been shown to be detrimental to students’ subject knowledge (p. 302). She also writes that students’ knowledge of English is not improved by integrating English into other subjects, but is instead improved by students’ extracurricular English use (p. 302). Hence, whether English should be included during the school day, at other times than during English lessons, and if so, to what extent, is a question still actively being debated.

### 2.2.2 Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility

The second method that research advocates to facilitate second language learning among young learners, is to make the second language accessible to students in as many ways as possible. In their book *How Languages are Learned*, Lightbown and Spada (2013) show that by varying lessons and employing different materials, teachers can satisfy many different learning styles (p. 81). Lundberg (2007) agrees and declares that varying the activities and activating students’ emotions and senses is essential in order to keep students’ interest and facilitate their comprehension (pp. 93, 124). Salona Madriñan (2014) similarly emphasizes the use of both visual and tactile aids in second language instruction to help foster understanding and further students’ learning (p. 62). Porras González (2010) concurs and states that involving students in active instructional settings help teachers create encouraging learning environments (p. 105), while Harmer (2007) argues that by being active, children learn better (p. 83).

The following avenues to language accessibility will be discussed below: the use of course-books and the use of active learning situations to include use of books and stories, songs and rhymes, total physical response, as well as creativity and drama.

#### 2.2.2.1 Using course-books during lessons

One way to make the second language accessible to students is to use English course-books during lessons. In the article *Instructional Materials Commonly Employed by Foreign Language Teachers at Elementary Schools*, Çakir (2015) presents research regarding the use of instructional materials in early second language instruction. His study shows that many teachers regard course-books as an indispensable tool for teaching English as a second language and that teachers frequently rely heavily on such books to form the foundation for second language instruction. Çakir explains that teachers appreciate course-books partly because pre-printed books help ensure that students are taught the appropriate material. Teachers rely on course-books to ensure that what they teach students is consistent with the requirements for the course (p. 78). Çakir notes that another reason teachers appreciate working with pre-printed course-books is that they find it challenging and time-consuming to create their own instructional materials (pp. 77-78).

Similarly, Harmer (2007) shows that course-books and accompanying materials, such as audio CDs, video material, and explanatory teacher’s guides, allow teachers to spend less time
planning lessons while still being able to feel confident that students will be presented with satisfactory material (p. 181). Lindström (1998) points to similar benefits of course-books and states that many teachers use the books as a safety net. The course-books provide direction on what to teach and when to do it, which Lindström says can make insecure teachers feel more comfortable in their roll of teaching a second language (p. 35). Sundin (2001) concurs in her article Teaching Language to Beginners Aged Seven to Ten Years, and states that course-books and other prepared materials (like CDs) are provided by various publishers with the purpose of “making it easier for teachers to structure the language material” (p. 158, my translation).

Additionally, it is noted that students often seem to like working with course-books (Çakir 2015, p. 78; Harmer 2007, p. 181; Lindström 1998, p. 34). Çakir (2015) says that students can use course-books to measure their progress (p. 78). Harmer (2007) also stresses that books offer students a sense of progress, as well as a possibility for structured review and repetition. Some students, he remarks, therefore find textbooks motivating to use (p. 181).

Tok (2010), in the report TEFL Textbook Evaluation: From Teachers' Perspectives, sums up the multiple reasons to use a course-book in English as a second language classes by referencing Cunningsworth (1995). Tok states that:

Cunningsworth (1995) identifies a textbook as a resource in presenting the material, a source for learners to practice and do the activities. They also provide the learners with a reference source on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. What is more, textbooks serve as a syllabus and a self-study source for learners. They also serve as a support for the beginning teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. (Cunningsworth 1995 in Tok 2010, p. 509).

Tok (2010) further notes that course-books are the most widely used instructional materials in second language classes (p. 508). In addition to course-books, many teachers vary their lessons by using a wide range of other material. For example, Lindström (1998) acknowledges that young students often appreciate having a textbook but suggests that such a book, instead of being a pre-printed textbook, could be constructed by the students themselves. By collecting material in a notebook or the like, students will have all their material accessible in their own, personal, textbook which they can then take pride in looking through and showing off to friends and family (p. 34). Lindström argues that creating personal books can be a way to capture the students’ attention, fostering their continued interest in the new language (p. 35).

2.2.2.2 Creating active learning situations
Another way to make the second language accessible to students is to engage students in various, more active learning situations. For example, active learning situations can be created by utilizing children’s books and stories during lessons. Porras González (2010) advocates this method because her research has found that in doing so, teachers can actively involve students in the lessons. Teachers can build lessons on books or stories that cater to students’ interests and likes, making instruction more fun and stimulating (p. 105). Porras González also points out that stories provide students with “meaningful, interesting and comprehensible” exposure to the target language, fostering their learning (p. 106). Lundberg (2007) is of the same mind and declares that books with interesting content as well as many repetitions engage students in
the lessons. She believes books should be read several times to give students the opportunity to become familiarized with both the content and the language, facilitating learning by way of repetition (p. 96). Lindström (1998) concurs and points to the fact that storybooks are frequently used by parents to further their child’s acquisition of his/her mother tongue. She proclaims that the storybook method therefore advantageously can be used in second language instruction in school as well. She explains that through storybooks students are given the opportunity to learn expressions and phrases in a natural and repetitive way (p. 45).

A second approach to creating active learning situations is to teach young learners English by employing *songs and rhymes*. Lundberg (2011) stresses that songs are an excellent tool to use in teaching pronunciation, and declares that songs help students develop a natural flow in the language. Furthermore, she states that songs provide an opportunity for students to learn English alongside others in a fun and safe environment - singing songs as a group gives even shy or insecure students the opportunity to produce language without feeling inadequate (p. 37). Lundberg also says that through the rhythm and melody of songs, remembering words and expressions becomes easier, allowing the language to establish deeper roots in the long-term memory of students. Similarly, Lundberg shows that rhymes too help foster language learning by cementing new vocabulary in the students’ memory (p. 38). Lindström (1998) agrees and reports that by using songs and rhymes, teachers can create educational situations that students enjoy. She argues that such situations can facilitate learning by acquisition, where students learn without direct knowledge of the fact that they are actually learning. Learning by acquisition, Lindström says, is the preferred way of learning a second language at an early age (p. 22).

A third option for creating active learning situations is to encourage students to learn by using a whole-body approach. Many authors advocate the use of *Total Physical Response, TPR*, in early language learning (see for example: Harmer 2007, p. 69; Lindström 1998, p. 31; Lundberg 2007, p. 95). TPR is a method designed to teach language by utilizing listening and comprehension skills, encouraging students to perform active actions in a playful way (Lindström 1998, p. 31). Billak (2013) states in the article *Second Language Acquisition at the Early Childhood Level: A 5-Year Longitudinal Case Study of Pre-Kindergarten through First-Grade Students*, that listening skills are developed quickly by young language learners (p. 682). Lindström and Lundberg both concur and show that when learning a second language, listening should come well before speaking, due to the fact that the ability to understand a second language is developed far ahead of the ability to produce the language (Lindström 1998, p. 31; Lundberg 2007, p. 95). It is common that beginning language learners are unable to respond in the new language verbally, but have the ability to do so physically (Lundberg 2007, p. 95). Therefore, Lundberg (2007) explains that TPR-exercises are designed to make students listen to commands given by the teacher (for example *sit down, open the door, stand on one foot*), and then act on them, preferably as a whole group so that all students can participate without fear of being singled out. This practice encourages students to learn by using their whole body; a practice that facilitates both understanding, joy, and motivation (p. 95). Lindström points to similar benefits of TPR and declares that by associating words with an action, students are aided in anchoring the target language in their memory. Through TPR, language is given meaning (p. 31). Both Lindström and Lundberg agree that this “learning by doing” approach to English instruction supports language acquisition, and as an added benefit they disclose that it is also a favorite of the children (Lindström 1998, pp. 33, 46; Lundberg 2007, p. 95).
A fourth approach to creating active learning situations is to build lessons around creativity and drama. Lundberg (2007) explains that the use of play and imagination is of vital importance in successful early second language learning (p. 94) and notes that creativity has positive influences on second language learning (pp. 98-99, 115). When students are allowed to be active and creative they delve deeper into the language, fostering their learning. Drama, she says, can be a perfect aide in developing students’ verbal skills. Oftentimes students are hesitant to speak the target language, but may consider it easier to communicate behind a mask or as the voice of a puppet (pp. 98-99, 115). Lindström (1998) similarly suggests that a puppet or stuffed animal can be used by teachers as a tool for their own instruction, letting the puppet be the “voice” of the English lesson (p. 32). Lundberg agrees and claims that this technique can make it easier for the teacher to consistently speak English, as well as make it easier for students to accept that instruction is done in English. Students might be uncomfortable with their teacher speaking English, Lundberg says, but tend not to question a puppet doing so (pp. 99-100).

2.3 Background conclusion

Lgr 11 emphasizes that English language instruction should help students cultivate a lifelong interest in the language learning process while also aiding students in developing their communicative competency through knowledge of the language structure (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32). Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that over time there have been numerous theories regarding both the best way to teach and to learn a second language in the classroom (p. 153). Lundberg (2007) agrees and writes that in order to foster the successful language acquisition of young learners and to ensure their continued interest in and motivation for learning a second language, it is imperative that their first experience with the second language is a good one (p. 101). Lindström (1998) concurs and notes that all language instruction, regardless of the students’ ages, should be warm, inviting, interesting, and full of activity and joy (p. 32). Teachers of young learners, she says, should above all aim at fostering a desire within their students for continued language studies (p. 33). With that in mind, Lindström concludes that it is vital that young learners are taught a second language in a way that is appropriate for their age and pre-knowledge. Instruction should take into account the students’ needs and cognitive development, and the target language should be placed in a meaningful context (p. 41).

3 Method

In this section, a report regarding the method of choice for this study will be given. First, the selection of the sample will be defined. Second, the data collection methods will be accounted for. Third, the implementation of the study will be described, followed by an account of the data processing methods used. Then, ethical considerations will be presented as well as a report regarding reliability and validity. Finally, a criticism of the method used will be given.

3.1 Sample selection

The study was conducted using purposive sampling, which Crane and Hannibal (2012), in the book *IB Psychology: Course Book: Oxford IB Diploma Program*, define as a “sampling [that] targets a particular group of people” (p. 349). With the aim of the study in mind, participants in a purposive sampling are chosen because of their specific characteristics (ibid.). This study was
aimed at investigating the methodologies used by teachers of English for young learners, and therefore focused on teachers at four different elementary schools in southern Norrland. Two of these schools were public free-schools and two were public schools.

3.1.1 Participant school selection
The two free-schools were selected for two different reasons. One free-school was chosen specifically because it specializes in English instruction. The school aims to conduct the major part of all instruction in English and many of the teachers are native English speakers. The other free-school was chosen because of its geographical location. It is located in the same municipality as the two public schools in the study, making it more likely that the student population would be somewhat equivalent and that the teachers would have comparable working conditions. The two public schools were selected for the same reason.

3.1.2 Participant teacher selection
The participating schools were selected by the author of this study for the above mentioned reasons. The participating teachers however, were assigned to the study by the principal of each school based on the fact that they were English teachers for young learners. Because of this, participating teachers have varying backgrounds and varying degrees of knowledge of English.

Teacher A works at a free-school with about 200 students from Kindergarten to grade six and teaches English in grade three as a subject-specific teacher, meaning that she only has the third graders during English lessons. In addition to teaching English in third grade, teacher A is also the class teacher in first grade. For the purpose of this study, teacher A’s first grade class is not included in the results concerning time spent by the teacher speaking English (figures 2 and 3 below), nor in the results regarding the amount of lesson time allowed for English each week (figure 4 below). Only her third grade class is included in those results. Teacher A’s first grade class is included only in the qualitative results regarding methodology of instruction in order to give further depth and contrast to these results.

Teacher A graduated from a teacher training program for grades 1-7. The program included a small amount of instruction in all subjects and a specialization in one or two subjects. Teacher A studied 7.5 hp (Swedish university credits) English, but did not specialize in it. She has received no continuing education in English. She believes she is certified to teach English in grades 1-3, but is at the time of our interview not completely certain of that fact. Teacher A says she does not have any particular interest in English as a private person, and although she thinks the language is fun, she does not specifically seek it out.

Teacher B works at a public school that is made up of about 540 students in Kindergarten through grade nine. She is a third grade class teacher and instructs her students in most subjects, including English. Teacher B graduated from an early childhood teacher training program with a specialization in Swedish. The program did not include any instruction in English and teacher B has received no continuing education in English. She is not certified to teach English at any grade level, and she says that she would prefer not to teach English. Teacher B describes herself as “very weak” in English and says she is “very bad at speaking English”. She states that she has no interest in English at all as a private person.

Teacher C works at a public school with about 350 students in grades three through nine. She is a third grade class teacher and instructs her students in most subjects, including English. In addition to her role as a class teacher, teacher C is also a subject-specific teacher of English
to students in grade five. For the purpose of this study however, focus will be only on teacher C’s work with the students in grade three.

Teacher C graduated from a teacher training program aimed at grades 1-7, with a specialization in Swedish and social studies. During the program she received no instruction in English. However, before commencing the teacher training program, teacher C completed an unrelated class in English at the university worth 30 hp (Swedish university credits). She believes she is licensed to teach English in grades one through six. Teacher C has taught English for many years and enjoys doing so.

Teacher D works at a free-school with a specialization in English. The school has about 600 students in grades three through six. Teacher D teaches English in grade three as a subject-specific teacher, meaning that she only has the third grade students during English lessons. She also teaches other grades, but for the purpose of this study focus will be only on her work in grade three. Teacher D is a native English speaker who completed her teacher training program in an English speaking country. She has lived in Sweden for several years and has knowledge of the Swedish language.

Teacher E works at a free-school with a specialization in English. The school has about 600 students in grades three through six. Teacher E teaches English in grade four as a subject-specific teacher and only sees the fourth grade students during English lessons. Teacher E is a native Swedish speaker who has lived, studied, and worked in an English speaking country for a prolonged period of time. Her knowledge of English is therefore native-like. She received her teacher training in an English speaking country.

Because teacher E currently does not teach grade three, her class is not included in the results concerning time spent by the teacher speaking English (figures 2 and 3 below), nor in the results regarding the amount of lesson time allowed for English each week (figure 4 below). Teacher E is included only in the qualitative results regarding methodology of instruction in order to give further depth and contrast to these results.

### 3.2 Data collection methods

The study was conducted using both interviews and observations in order to provide results that could be compared and contrasted. It was conducted as a qualitative study with a few quantitative elements. Crane and Hannibal (2012) define a qualitative study as a gathering of textual data through direct contact with participants, and a quantitative study as gathering of numeric data (p. 345). The interviews were qualitative in design and the observations were both qualitative and quantitative.

The interviews were semi-structured, which Crane and Hannibal (2012) explain is the most common method for collecting data in qualitative research (p. 354). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses a list of possible interview questions as a guide. The interviewer is not strictly limited to the specific questions in the guide, but has the freedom to explore the various themes of the guide (ibid.). The interviewee is encouraged to answer the questions with his or her own words (Patel & Davidson 2011, p. 82). Interviews with a qualitative approach almost always have a low level of structure (Crane & Hannibal 2012, p. 354; Patel & Davidson 2011, p. 81), and the interviews in this study were therefore informal in nature with a conversational tone.
Patel and Davidson (2011) state in their book *The Grounds of Research Methodology: To Plan, Implement and Report on a Study*, that observations can be conducted differently depending on the aim of the study. Observations can be strictly focused on a certain action or behavior, or they can be more open-ended and used in an exploratory fashion with the goal of obtaining as much information as possible (p. 92-93). The observations in this study were not constrained by any specific areas, making the observations semi-structured (Crane & Hannibal 2012, p. 367).

The observations were conducted as non-participant observations, which Crane and Hannibal (2012) say means that the observer did not take an active part in the observed situation (p. 364). The observations were carried out in the teachers’ regular classrooms with their informed consent, and can according to Crane and Hannibal therefore be said to have been both naturalistic (p. 366) and overt (p. 368).

### 3.3 Implementation

The initial contact with the schools was made via an e-mail to each principal, which briefly explained the purpose of the study (see *appendix 1*). Permission to observe one or more English lessons in grade three and to interview the relevant teacher was requested. The principals responded with contact information for the appropriate English teachers. Teachers were then contacted directly via e-mail and/or telephone to schedule observations and interviews.

Teachers were interviewed orally and each interview was audio-recorded. Patel and Davidson (2011) recommend audio-recording interviews in order to ensure that accurate answers are documented. They point out that in order to make audio-recordings during an interview, the interviewee must give his/her consent (p. 87). All interviewees were given a consent form to sign, available in *appendix 2*. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were based on the study’s research questions and can be found in *appendix 3*.

Total interview time was about 2 hours and 30 minutes. The interviews for teachers A and B were each about 30 minutes long. In the case of teacher C, there was not enough time available to complete the interview in one sitting and she was therefore interviewed at two different times, two days apart, for a total of about 30 minutes. Teacher E was also interviewed at two different times. During the first interview, the audio-recording equipment could not be used. Teacher E was therefore, after the fact, given a written summary of the content of that interview and was asked to sign it for authentication, which she did. That interview was about 30 minutes in length. Teacher E was then interviewed a second time. That interview was audio-recorded and was also about 30 minutes long. Teacher D was unable to spare enough time for a proper interview, which is why remarks in this essay regarding teacher D are based solely on the observations made in her class.

In addition to interviews, observations were carried out for a total of about 18 hours. All teachers were given a consent form to sign, available in *appendix 4*. Because of the semi-structured nature of the observations, no area was of specific interest. The observer therefore took notes on all matters deemed interesting and relevant. At least one observation of each teacher was also audio-recorded. Although students were present in the classroom during the observations, the observer focused only on the actions of the teacher. No students were observed and no students are in any way a part of this study.
All documents in appendix 1-4 are presented in English. However, the documents also exist in a Swedish version. When presented to participants of the study, it was the participant’s choice whether to receive the document in question in English or in Swedish.

3.4 Data processing
Patel and Davidson (2011) state that after information has been gathered, the data has to be processed and categorized in order to arrive at the answers to the research questions (p. 111). They note that for qualitative studies there is no one recommended data processing method. Instead each unique research study demands its own method of data processing (p. 120). Patel and Davidson suggest that qualitative data such as audio-recordings, can be processed by transcribing the audio-file into a text document for further handling (p. 120). Therefore, after each interview was completed, it was transcribed verbatim into a word processing document.

The transcribed interviews were read through a number of times with a focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the respondent’s answers. Patterns and themes in the interviews were located, color coded, and combined into a word processing document. The notes from the observations were read and coded in the same fashion as the interview transcripts, and after being processed, the coded observation material was also added to the word processing document according to theme.

The audio-recorded observations were listened to several times with a focus on what activities took place, as well as to how much time the teacher spent speaking English during the lesson. By analyzing the observations, it was found that the data could be structured into six different areas. The processed data was then arranged in three diagrams. Patel and Davidson (2011) state that this kind of “descriptive statistics” can be used to describe the gathered information using numbers (p. 111).

Finally, the processed data was compiled in the results section of this essay. Patel and Davidson (2011) note that qualitative studies usually are reported in such a way; through text where quotes from interviews are combined with personal interpretations and commentary (p. 121). Although some interviews were completed in Swedish, teachers have been cited in English. All translations of teachers’ quotes have been done by the author of this essay.

3.5 Ethical considerations
According to Crane and Hannibal (2012), ethical considerations in qualitative research include: “informed consent, protection of participants from psychological or physical harm, respect for the participants’ integrity and privacy, and the right to withdraw from research”, as well as considerations regarding anonymity and objectivity (p. 347).

Participants in this study gave informed written consent both for the observations and the interviews. They were given the choice to allow or disallow the observations to be audio-recorded. Care was taken to protect participants from psychological and physical harm. The study was conducted with the participants’ integrity and privacy in mind, and participants remain anonymous in the results of this study. Participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the study. Consideration has in every respect been made to ensure that participants of this study were informed, protected, and respected.

Objectivity is a more difficult ethical consideration, but a diligent attempt has been made to ensure objectivity both in doing the theoretical research and in conducting and analyzing the observations and interviews. No information has been altered or falsified.
3.6 Reliability and validity

According to Patel and Davidson (2011) it is important to ensure that the study has validity; that the study actually investigates that which the researcher had in mind to investigate (p. 102). Bryman (2002) states in his book *Social Research Methods*, that validity is the most important consideration during research (p. 43) and explains that validity concerns whether the results from the study actually correspond with the objective of the study (p. 88). The aim of this study was to investigate what methodologies are used in the English instruction of young learners, and all efforts were made to ensure the study’s validity by attempting to stay true to that topic.

Patel and Davidson (2011) also note that it is important that the study have a high level of reliability (p. 102), which Bryman (2002) explains concerns whether the results of the study are trustworthy and whether they were collected using reliable methods (p. 86). He also says that reliability concerns whether the results can be duplicated if the study were to be performed again, or whether the results were affected by conditions during the study (p. 43). In performing this study, attempts to ensure its reliability were made by using both interviews and observations, as well as by studying several different teachers, in order to note possible variations in the results. However, it is possible that the results were affected by the methods used in performing the study. Patel and Davidson say that “the tape recorder can affect the answers one gets” during an interview (p. 87). If that was the case during the interviews, the results may not be completely reliable. Since an audio-recorder was also used during the observations, those results might have been affected by the use of a recording device as well.

Another factor that potentially could have affected the reliability, was the presence of the observer. Patel and Davidson (2011) argue that a drawback to observations is that it is difficult for the observer to know whether the observed behavior or actions are indeed characteristic for the observed person (p. 92). For example, teacher B stated that she was embarrassed to have someone observe her lesson, due to the fact that she does not feel confident about her ability to teach English. The presence of an observer might therefore have influenced her to act differently than she normally would.

Finally, the reliability might well have been affected by the actual teacher participants. There is no indication in the study that these particular teachers are in any way representative of the general population of teachers of English as a second language to young learners in the southern Norrland area of Sweden. The results of this study can therefore not be generalized, but must be viewed within the context of this study. There is also no way to generalize the results presented in figures 2 and 3, regarding activities during lesson time and teacher talk time. The results in these graphs are valid only for the observations included in this study. The results cannot be said to be typical of the lessons these teachers hold. It is possible that the results would be different if further observations were to be conducted.

3.7 Method criticism

In addition to the caveat regarding validity and reliability above, some other criticism can be raised regarding the method of this study. In retrospect, the study could probably have benefitted from being implemented slightly differently. As it was, the teachers were observed and interviewed during the same day, either with the interview being first, immediately preceding the observed lesson, or with the interview being last, immediately following the observed lesson. Additional observations were done at a later date.
Instead, it might have been beneficial if all observations would have been completed first, well in advance of the interviews. The notes from the observations could then have been used in addition to the research questions to form the basis for the semi-structured interviews to be conducted at a later date. Another alternative could have been to conduct an initial interview, followed by observations, ending with a final interview where observation notes could have been brought up. Structuring the study in such a way might have given more depth to the interview questions and could have generated more informative interview results.

In regards to the interviews, another drawback was that although up to an hour of each teacher’s time was requested, most teachers were pressed for time and were eager to finish the interviews in no more than half an hour. In addition to this issue, the interviews were conducted in empty classrooms, causing students and personnel to interrupt the interview if they entered the room (which they frequently did). Both these issues might have affected the results of the study, causing interview answers not to be as informative and detailed as they could have been had more undisturbed time been available. An option might have been to be even clearer in explaining that an undisturbed hour in a quiet setting was requested for each interview. Another option might have been to give the teachers the interview questions ahead of time, allowing them time to reflect on the questions and consider answers before the actual interview. Such a strategy might have generated more thought-through answers.

In regards to the observations, adequate data was generated which brought about interesting results. It is however, possible, and even likely, that more observations would have generated even more useful data, possibly giving further strength to the results.

4 Results

In this section, the results from the teacher observations and interviews will be reported. Like the background, the results are divided up in two main areas: Goals of English instruction for young learners, focusing on the results regarding the current curriculum in English for young students, and Methodologies in early second language instruction with subheadings Using the target language during lessons and Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility, focusing on what methods teachers use when instructing young learners in English.

4.1 Goals of English instruction for young learners

The interviewed teachers seem to be in agreement with each other that the main goal of English instruction for young learners should be to make learning enjoyable and fun. Teacher C says that she believes that early second language instruction should aim at students “thinking it is fun”. She says that there should not be too much pressure on students, because “the knowledge requirements in the curriculum are not that high anyway”. Instead, she says, it is important to foster students’ desire to learn the language, as well as help them develop the confidence necessary to speak it. Teacher E is of the same mind and states that she aims at “building up their confidence, and I start that by trying to get them to think that English is fun, that they want to try.” Similarly, teacher A explains that she thinks beginning learners need to feel like they are capable language learners that are good at English. This feeling, she believes, will “make them want more”.

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4.2 Methodologies in early second language instruction

4.2.1 Using the target language during lessons
The teachers all use the target language during lessons, but the study shows differences in how they do so.

4.2.1.1 Quantity of target language exposure
The circle diagrams in figure 2 below breaks down the time spent by teachers A, B, C, and D on various activities during lessons. Based on the observations, lesson time could be divided up into the following six areas:

- Students listen to English via a CD or DVD
- Students speak English all together (exercises where students repeated after the teacher or after the CD in choir mode)
- Students speak English in small groups (students did oral exercises two and two or in small groups, without help from the teacher)
- Teacher speaks English
- Teacher speaks Swedish
- Other (students worked individually, quietly in for example a workbook, time spent waiting on the teacher to prepare a CD or DVD).

The piece of each circle diagram that represents *Teacher speaks English* has been broken out of the diagram for emphasis.

![Circle Diagrams](image)

*Figure 2. Percentage of lesson time dedicated to activities in English and Swedish.*
The time each teacher spent speaking English or Swedish will be detailed further in *figure 3* below. First, a look at the time not spent by the teachers talking.

As noted in *figure 2*, the lesson time dedicated to other activities than the teachers talking is divided up differently by the various teachers. Students are encouraged to do oral exercises in small groups by teachers B (10% of the lesson time), C (30%), and D (13%), whereas teacher A does not incorporate any such activity in the observed lessons. Having students listen quietly to English spoken via a CD or DVD is a tactic employed by teachers A (6%), teacher B (10%), and teacher C (13%). Teacher D uses a CD, but instead of listening quietly, the students sing along with it, which is why that time is noted as “Students speak English all together” in the diagram (14%). The other teachers also have students speak English as a group: teacher A (4%), teacher B (6%), teacher C (10%). Finally, some time is spent by the teachers preparing CDs or DVDs, handing out material, and organizing the next activity, as well as by students working quietly in exercise books. These activities are labeled as “Other” in the diagrams and are part of all the teachers’ lessons: teacher A (21%), B (20%), C (15%), and D (18%).

The diagrams in *figure 2* show that the teachers spend a varying amount of time speaking English during lessons. Teacher D speaks mainly English (45% of the lesson), and some Swedish (10% of the lesson). Teacher C spends 18% of the lesson speaking English and 14% speaking Swedish. Teacher B spends 2% of the lesson time speaking English and 52% speaking Swedish. Teacher A speaks English 13% and Swedish 56% of the lesson time. In *figure 3* below, the time each teacher spends talking in either English or Swedish has been combined. For example, looking at *figure 2* above, teacher D spends 55% of the lesson time speaking either English (45%) or Swedish (10%). Looking at *figure 3* below, Teacher D’s total talk time (55% of the lesson) is shown to consist of her speaking English 81% of the talk time and Swedish 19% of the talk time.

![Time spent talking by each teacher English versus Swedish](image)

*Figure 3. Teacher talk time, English versus Swedish*

Looking at *figure 3*, the differences between the amount of talk time each teacher dedicates to English and Swedish is evident. Teacher D speaks mainly English (81% of the teacher talk time) but switches to Swedish occasionally (19% of the teacher talk time), mainly when giving instructions that she wants to be sure the students understand and can follow. On the other hand, Teacher B spends very little time speaking English during her talk time (3%). She says that she is “very bad at speaking English” and stresses that she is not comfortable teaching the language.
The only time she speaks English is to repeat after the CD, and even then she appears to try to keep such repetitions to a minimum. Most of Teacher B’s lessons are conducted in Swedish (97% of the teacher talk time), and translation from English to Swedish seems to be a focal point: “I do not know if it is the right method, but I stop [the CD] after each [sentence] because I want everyone to understand what this text is about […] so we translate immediately after each little speech bubble”. Teacher B stresses that she feels that she can reach more students “if they get [the text] translated, in a calm tempo first”.

Like teacher B, teacher A also spends quite a bit of her talk time speaking Swedish (81%) and immediately translates what was said in English into Swedish to ensure that students understand: “I try to speak a lot of English […] but then I repeat it in Swedish after, because otherwise [the students] do not understand”. Teacher A also frequently pauses the CD to ask students for the translation of the text they just heard, just like teacher B. She admits that “it is easy” to end up speaking too much Swedish during lessons and states that she does, “way too much probably”. She spends 19% of her talk time speaking English.

Teacher C says she tries to focus on speaking English (56%) during her talk time but explains that some students find her doing so difficult, which is why she also speaks Swedish on occasion (44%): “I try! But […] of course I say things in Swedish too because there are those who think it is difficult. […] So I guess I, I skip back and forth a little.” During the observations of her lessons it is evident that teacher C indeed does attempt to speak plenty of English. Students frequently pose questions or comments in Swedish, but teacher C most often answers them in English, sometimes using gestures, mimicry, or tone of voice to explain her point. For example, as she says: “Open your books”, she also uses her hands and pretends to open a book. Another example is when she asks the students if they know what “sing” means and she actually sings the word “sing” in an exaggerated tone of voice. She gives the students clues to the meaning of the words and expressions without giving them a direct and immediate translation.

Teacher D also gives clues to the meaning of words to her students. During the observation she, for example, used her hands to demonstrate the word “talking”, pointed to her ears for “listening”, pointed to herself for “I”, pointed to her head to demonstrate “thinking”, and flipped her hands over to show “the other side of the paper”. Teacher E, who is not included in either figure 2 or figure 3 because she currently teaches grade four, also advocates using gestures, body language or mimicry to convey the meaning of words that students do not understand. She says that by her using gestures, the students “don’t need to know any of those words, [they] understand” anyway. She also explains that by showing what she means (for example by pointing to show the meaning of the verb to point), she feels that she helps those students who learn by sight: “I think that that’s good. It helps the visual learners”.

In addition to gestures, teacher E also uses another tactic to make the target language comprehensible to students without using translation: she explains words either by using other, easier words, or by putting words into context. For example, in order to demonstrate that “to go” does not only mean “to walk”, she gave the following examples: “You can go into town by bus. You can go into town by car.” She says that instead of just telling students the meaning of the word, she tries “to explain it in a different way”. Teacher E says that she prefers to speak only English, but that it is difficult to do so if students are not yet proficient enough in the language to understand.
4.2.1.2 Frequency, repetition, and authenticity of target language exposure

All the observed third grade classes have English on the schedule, but the amount of allotted time varies, as does the number of lessons. Teacher A’s class has English during two 50-minute lessons each week. Teacher B’s class has one 60-minute lesson on the schedule, but due to changes that the teachers have done for practical reasons, the actual time of the lesson is only about 45 minutes. Teacher C has English twice a week with her class, for about 40 minutes each time. Teacher D’s class has two lessons a 60 minutes each week. This information is also shown in the table in figure 4 below.

Figure 4, Time scheduled for English lessons each week

None of the observed teachers say they work with English at other times than during English lessons. Teachers A and D are subject-specific teachers and do not have the students during any other lessons. Teacher C says that some English “might sneak in” to other lessons, but does not purposefully work with English at other times than during English lessons. Teacher B refers to the fact that she is not licensed to teach English and says: “I am very bad at spontaneous English […] because I feel insecure”. She does say that students occasionally have the opportunity to take a break from other subjects during long lessons and play English board games for a few minutes instead, but notes that it is not a frequently recurring activity. Although teacher E works with fourth graders and is therefore not included in figure 4, she too is a subject-specific teacher and does not see her students at other times.

Many of the teachers point to repetition as a necessary part of second language learning. Teacher A explains that she uses the morning lesson in her first grade classroom to repeat educational material she wants to be sure the students learn in all subjects, including in English: “I see it as not just a time to take attendance, but I see [morning gatherings] as a sneaky way to hammer in things that I want them to know”. During one of the observed lessons, Teacher A spent about five minutes of the morning gathering repeating English with the students. She greeted them in English: “Good morning, children!”, and they in turn greeted her: “Good morning, teacher!” They also repeated expressions such as: “What’s your name?”, “How old are you?”, “Where do you live?”, “What is he/she wearing?”, and students answered the questions both individually and as a group, getting help from each other and from the teacher as necessary. Teacher A says she tries to include a short English segment during each morning gathering in order to promote learning by repetition.
Teacher B also stresses the importance of repetition. She says: “I am no language teacher, but I believe that repetition, that it kind of [helps the students]”. She notes that “we listen to the whole text once […] and then we look at it on the screen […], then we look at it one more time”. She explains that students also do exercises in the workbook for each chapter in the textbook, and stresses that the homework students get is also tied to the chapter: “there is repetition all the time”.

Teacher D organizes many of her lessons around repetition: working with flashcards, playing games, singing songs, doing physical activities – all in an effort to repeat and memorize words and expressions. Teacher C is of a similar mind and notes that in order to be successful in learning proper pronunciation, repetition is important. Students have to hear the language and say the words many times. According to her, students need to “listen to the texts several times. How do they say [things]? Try to imitate, say after [the person speaking]!” Teacher C emphasizes pronunciation and the development of a “natural feel for the language”. In order to achieve these goals she believes it is important to listen and try to imitate the language. She explains that children learn their mother tongue by way of imitation and argues that second language learning should be done the same way. “I believe in imitation”, she says and continues: “It has to do with how one learns, how children learn their own mother tongue. One imitates.” Teacher C stresses that in order to develop good pronunciation it is important to listen carefully and repeatedly, and to “try to imitate, say after [the person talking]”.

Teacher A also emphasizes pronunciation. She states that it, in her opinion, is important to “start well” because that will lead students to continue on the right path. She explains that when the students are meant to learn new vocabulary or expressions, she will say the words in English first and ask students to repeat after her: “I read first and then they read after [me] and then I am super exact about [their pronunciation]. […] I can get annoyed by pronunciation like chicken for example, that one says shicken here, not tchicken”.

Another factor that both teacher A and teacher E mention as important, is that English should become authentic to students. Teacher A says that she feels students need to understand why they should learn English: “[The teacher] should talk about […] why it is so good to know English”. If they understand why they should study English, teacher A says she feels their motivation and desire to learn will increase. Teacher E agrees and states that: “I always try and make it real for them”. She argues that if students understand that they need English as a communication tool in order to, for example, order food abroad, then they might be more motivated to learn.

4.2.2 Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility

4.2.2.1 Using course-books during lessons

All the observed teachers use a course-book to some degree in the classroom. Although teacher E says that she does not much like textbooks and prefers to work with other material, she admits that there are benefits to working with a course-book. She says the book she uses does cover quite a bit of relevant material, is easy to work with, is based on the requirements from Lgr 11, and most importantly – each chapter is divided into three segments (one easier, one average, and one more advanced) which makes it convenient for her when planning lessons and adapting instruction to the varying skill levels of her students. In addition, Teacher E states that having
a course-book that is based on the requirements from Lgr 11 makes it easier for her to respond to critical parents who sometimes question the content of her lessons.

As opposed to teacher E who reluctantly works with the course-book, teacher B bases all her instruction on the book. The class reads in the textbook, listens to the accompanying CD and DVD, and completes the corresponding exercises in the workbook and via the digital online platform. Teacher B says: “I use the material straight up because I feel very insecure otherwise”. She stresses that she is not qualified to teach English and remarks: “We base everything on [the course-book]”, and emphasizes that “[the course-book] is our security”.

Teacher A also states that the course-book provides her with a sense of security: “If one is not an English teacher, how should one know what [content] to include really, and in what order to do things?”. The philosophy of the school she works at is based on not using course-books in any subject, but teacher A questions this practice: “I do not understand that, that it is a goal in itself not to have a book”, because she feels that a course-books helps her ensure that “[the students] will not have any [knowledge] gaps later”. She has reached a compromise with the school and has been allowed to purchase a teacher’s copy of a course-book which she uses as a guide to planning her lessons. The students do not have individual copies of the book, but do listen to the CD and DVD that accompanied the teacher’s book. Occasionally teacher A gives the students worksheets to complete, which they then glue into a notebook they have for that specific purpose. Similarly, teacher C’s students also have a notebook dedicated to English where they take notes and attach worksheets. Teacher C says she uses such a notebook because she feels that using the workbook that accompanies the textbook is unnecessary: “It just becomes half-filled out”. Like teachers A and B, teacher C does use the CD that accompanies the course-book and lets students listen to the recorded texts.

### 4.2.2.2 Creating active learning situations

All the teachers state that they believe in varying the content of the lessons. Teacher A says she feels that it is important with variation in order to keep the students’ interest and avoid that it is always “the same, same, same”. She remarks that due to the students’ young ages she finds it necessary to change activities often during lessons: “I think that when it is [a matter of] young children, one has to change activities periodically”. In addition to working with the course-books and listening to the accompanying CD, teacher A therefore tries to incorporate games, songs, rhymes, and physical activities where the students get to move around. Most recently the students in grade three also listened as teacher A read the story about *The Gruffalo*, and after working with the storybook they watched the short movie based on the book.

Teacher C also tries to vary her lessons by involving many different aspects like listening, reading, watching a movie, playing games, and doing physical activities. However, she states that she tends to follow a similar pattern: “I think it is [important] to vary, to try, but at the same time I probably have a very red thread”. She explains that she varies the activities during lessons but keeps the focus on pronunciation and on developing a “natural feel for the language”. Teacher C also stresses that it is important to be open to changing the methods one is used to employing as a teacher. She says that it is important that “[instruction] is not static” and that one can learn, adapt, and “change from year to year” in order to benefit the students’ learning. Another factor that teacher C emphasizes is that she believes that learning through physical movement is beneficial. She likes to engage students in TPR and frequently asks them to act
out words and expressions such as “stand up”, “sit down”, and “lie down”. She says: “I believe that [if the students are active] with their bodies, then maybe something will end up in their body-memory”.

In theory, teacher B agrees with both teachers A and C, but states that due to her limited knowledge of English and the lack of confidence she has in her abilities, she feels restricted. When her students were in second grade, English instruction consisted of them watching a short educational film each week (*Kids English Zone*). Now in third grade, teacher B states that she “completely bases [lessons] on [the course-book in use]” and the accompanying material. She refers to the dilemma she and a colleague in a similar situation experience when she says that: “Because we are so unsure […], we are completely, we are simply committed to this material”. Teacher B explains that her lack of English knowledge makes it difficult for her to vary activities: “Some subjects I can teach anyway, and feel confident in […] but English that I am so unsure of […] makes it so that I cannot be spontaneous”.

As opposed to teacher B, teacher E is very comfortable with the English language and actually prefers to build her lessons around other activities than a course-book. She says that varying her lessons and designing activities so “that it is not the same all the time” is important, both in order to catch students’ interest and engage them, and in order to cater to the different preferences and learning styles that students have. “Some of them”, she says, “like sitting quietly and getting on. They do not like this, all singing and all dancing”, whereas “others love the singing and […] they hate writing”. Teacher E says that varying activities by including, for example games, videos, songs, storybooks, and activities where students get to be physically active, is one of her overall aims, because students tend to enjoy such activities, which increases their motivation and leads them to find learning English fun. At the same time though, she makes sure to note that she believes “routines and structures and things at this age” are important. She therefore organizes her lessons so that the students know that one lesson a week is aimed at more quiet, individual, grammar based work, whereas the other two lessons each week contain more varied activities. Teacher E remarks that she would like to be able to do even more varied activities with her students but says that she is restricted by the environment. The classrooms, she notes, are not very big, and floor space is limited with all the desks, chairs, and students that are in there. She states that “if you are the sort of person who likes doing a lot of drama, in a classroom like that you can’t”.

Teacher D also struggles with the lack of physical space. During one observation she wanted students to play a game that required open floor space. To do so they had to leave the classroom and go to a near-by room, first rearranging furniture before they could start the game. Teacher D says her students need a good deal of movement. She remarks that they have very sedative lessons before having English with her, and in order to get them to focus on the English lesson, she opts to start each lesson with a physical activity. She frequently uses a song-and-dance routine from gonoodle.com, an activity she says the students really enjoy. In addition to physical activities, teacher D also structures her lessons around songs, storybooks, and games. Currently her class is working with flashcards through games in order to learn the vocabulary necessary to then be able to read the story about *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Several teachers note that working with alternative learning situations can be difficult because of the lack of material available. Teacher A says there is no material available to her at her school and points out that in fact, she has had to buy books with her own money, “just for
my own survival”. Teacher B says there is very little material available other than what comes with the course-book, although she acknowledges that the school does have a very good library and that the librarian might be able to help her find some appropriate English children’s books if needed. Teacher C has quite a few English books and magazines in her classroom, but states that those are her own private books that she has chosen to use during lessons.

5 Discussion

In this section, a discussion and analysis of the results will be juxtaposed to the research findings of the background. For ease of understanding, the discussion is organized according to the same structure, and using the same headings, as both the background and the results. The findings of the study will be summarized and related to the research questions under the heading Conclusion. As a final point, suggestions regarding additional areas of interest in relation to this study will be presented in Further studies.

5.1 Goals of English instruction for young learners

The fact that the English syllabus in the current curriculum, Lgr 11, stresses that instruction for young learners should aim at helping students develop a lasting interest in foreign languages (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32), is acknowledged by Lindström (1998, p. 20) as well as by Lundberg (2011, p. 127). As shown in the study, teachers of young English learners seem to agree. Teacher C says that she aims to design her lessons so that students participate in them, “thinking it is fun”. Like Lindström and Lundberg, she argues that it is important to foster a desire for learning the language. Teacher E voices a similar opinion and states that young learners need to enjoy learning the language. She says that if students have fun learning English, they will be motivated to keep trying and to learn more.

Teacher A believes that English is a subject that fascinates young learners. She remarks that in today’s society, English is “completely natural to them” and points out that young children are “marinated in English all the time” through, for example television shows and online websites. She therefore believes that teachers should take advantage of this interest in the language when designing their English instruction. She mentions that focusing beginning instruction on easy content that the students may already know (like colors, games, and rhymes) encourages students because they find it enjoyable, and because it makes them feel confident and able. Like teacher A, teacher B also mentions that many of her students know quite a bit of English already due to the fact that they watch movies and play video games in their spare time. However, she finds it difficult to take advantage of this pre-knowledge in her lessons because of the fact that she feels she lacks the ability and competence to teach English properly.

The fact is, that although Lgr 11 emphasizes the cultivation of students’ lifelong interest in the language learning process through a communicative approach (Skolverket 2011a, p. 32), the curriculum does not instruct teachers in how to accomplish this goal. SNAE has established general guidelines for the core content of English in grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9 (Skolverket 2011a, pp. 33-35), as well as knowledge requirements for students at the end of grades 6 and 9 (ibid., pp. 35-38). However, what is not presented is the specific subject matter to be covered. Lgr 11 also does not specify how teachers should design lessons in order to promote student learning, nor does it establish at what age English instruction should start, save to say that instruction
should commence before the end of grade three. In other words, the goals of English instruction for young learners are clear, but there are no set guidelines for how they should be accomplished which can be problematic for teachers who, like teacher B, feel insecure in their capacity as English teachers.

5.2 Methodologies in early second language instruction

Given the fact that no set guidelines for the English instruction of early learners in Swedish compulsory schools exist, Lundberg (2011) argues that teachers have an invaluable role in designing English instruction for their young learners (p. 127). Johansson and Svedner (2010) explain in their book *Diploma Work in the Teacher Program*, that each teacher, no matter the subject he/she is teaching, is responsible for organizing and designing his or her own instruction with the students’ best interest in mind. They point out that it is the teacher who selects the content of the lessons as well as the methodologies to be used (p. 8). Billak (2013) stresses that “teaching technique is an influencing factor in language learning for students in this age group” (p. 688), and Lindström (1998) emphasizes that English instruction for early learners therefore must be grounded in special methodology to help young students discover and get to know the language (p. 20).

As shown in the study, participating teachers in theory agree with this research. They mention the need to make instruction fun and relevant to students, and they argue that young students need variation in order not to lose interest. However, as will be discussed below, the study shows that although teachers are aware that special methodologies are needed, they do not always know which methodologies to use, and they do not always know how to best implement the ones they do use. How they go about designing lessons varies greatly from teacher to teacher.

5.2.1 Using the target language during lessons

5.2.1.1 Quantity of target language exposure

In doing research for this study it became evident that research advocates that students get frequent exposure to the target language over time, in order to facilitate second language learning (see for example: Börjesson 2012, p. 14; Harmer 2007, p. 56; Lightbown & Spada 2013, p. 69; Lindström 1998, pp. 18, 32; Lundberg 2007, p. 110). In fact, Harmer (2007) explains that it is important that the teacher provide students with this exposure by speaking the language. The teacher, he argues, knows the students and their abilities well and can adjust the language exposure accordingly which a textbook or audio recording cannot do (p. 118). Harmer even goes so far as to state that the teacher’s voice “represents the single most important source of language input” to students (p. 187). Lightbown and Spada (2013) are of a similar mind and explain that research done on babies show that audio recordings are not enough for them to learn a language; an authentic human voice is necessary for successful language learning to take place (p. 6). The results of this study, however, indicate that participating teachers find using the target language in the classroom difficult.

Looking at the data in the results (see figure 3 above for more information), a clear correlation can be made both between the teachers’ knowledge of English and their attitude towards the subject, and the amount of time they spend speaking English during lessons. Teacher D speaks the most English (81% of the teacher talk time compared to 19% Swedish).
She is a native English-speaker and is therefore quite comfortable with the language. Teacher C speaks English 56% of her talk time and Swedish 44%. Like teacher D, she is also quite comfortable with the language and says that she both enjoys speaking and teaching it: “I like English, I think it is important”. Teacher A speaks English 19% of her talk time compared to 81% Swedish. Although she says she enjoys the language, she is not enthusiastic about teaching it to young learners. She states that she prefers not to teach English whenever possible, because she finds it repetitive and somewhat tedious. Finally, teacher B speaks English only 3% of her talk time and Swedish 97%. In the interview she made it clear that she has not received any education in English and that she has no self-confidence in her abilities to use the language. She emphasizes that she does not want to teach English, and stresses that she feels that she is not qualified to do so.

Both teachers A, B, and C mention the fact that a major reason why they speak Swedish during lessons is because they feel that students otherwise do not understand. Because of this problem, teachers A and B simply resort to translating into Swedish in order to ensure students’ understanding. Teacher C instead tries to supplement the English language with gestures, mimicry, and tone of voice to emphasize the meaning of the word or expression she is using; a strategy that teacher D also frequently uses. Teacher E was not included in the diagram in figure 3 since she currently teaches a fourth grade class, but mentions that she finds using body language important both in order to clarify the meaning of words and to help visual learners. It again seems as though both the teachers’ knowledge of English and their attitude towards the subject affect how they approach the matter of helping students understand the language. Teachers A and B, who are less inclined to teach English and who have a lower level of education in English, prefer to translate, while teachers C, D, and E, who are all quite competent in English and who enjoy teaching the language, instead use gestures, mimicry, and tone of voice to facilitate understanding among students.

Based on the results of the study, it can therefore be deduced that although all teachers use the target language in their instruction, the quantity of the language that students are exposed to is affected by the teachers’ actual and perceived abilities in using the language. Those who are comfortable speaking and teaching English use the language more in the classroom. Those who are less comfortable speaking and teaching the language use it less in the classroom.

5.2.1.2 Frequency, repetition, and authenticity of target language exposure

Research shows that in addition to the quantity of the target language that students are exposed to, it is also important for teachers to consider the frequency of target language exposure. Harmer (2007) argues that frequent exposure to the target language facilitates language learning (p. 56). Lundberg (2007) shares this opinion, stressing that students should work with the language every day for optimal learning possibilities (p. 95). She argues that frequent, shorter lessons are more efficient than fewer, longer lessons because young learners tend to lose focus if lessons are too long (p. 130).

As noted earlier, there are however, also researchers who argue that too much exposure to English is detrimental, both to the students’ use of their first language (Darn 2006, p. 1) and to their knowledge of those subjects during which English might be given a lot of space (Sylvén 2013, p. 302). In fact, Sylvén (2013) states that students’ acquisition of English as a second
language is not improved by integrating English into other subjects, but has instead been shown to be improved by students’ use of English in activities outside of school (p. 302).

The results of the study indicate that none of the observed teachers incorporate English at any time other than during English lessons. Teachers A, D, and E are subject-specific teachers who do not see their students other than during English lessons. To include English at any other time of the school day is therefore difficult for them. Teachers B and C are class teachers and do have the opportunity to include English at other times. However, teacher B stresses that she does not want to teach English and argues that her insecurity regarding the language prohibits her from including it spontaneously during the day. She is, she states, simply not knowledgeable enough in the subject to be able to make it frequently recurring. On the other hand, teacher C is comfortable with the language but does not specifically include it during other lessons than English. Her lack of language usage might at least in part be due to the fact that, although she says she enjoys English and considers it an important subject, she does not believe it necessary to spend much time on English with young students. She states that: “English, most [students] like. We don’t need to practice it so much. We have other subjects we need to spend time on. [The students] learn so much English on their own nowadays”.

The observed teachers therefore all say they are limited to instruction during English lessons. As shown in figure 4 in the results section, the amount of time in grade three spent on English each week varies greatly. Teacher B only has one lesson of about 45 minutes each week whereas the other teachers all have two lessons each week, consisting of 80 minutes total (teacher C), 100 minutes total (teacher A), and 120 minutes total (teacher D). This data makes me question the equality of English instruction for young learners. Three of these teachers (teachers A, B, and C) teach English in the same municipality, and yet there is a difference of 55 minutes between the teacher with the lowest number of minutes allotted to English instruction each week and the teacher with the highest number of English lesson minutes. This point is remarkable, although in all actuality it probably is not uncommon. In fact, SNAE only specifies a total minimum number of lesson hours that each student should have received by the end of grade nine, without specifying how those hours should be allocated. The distribution of hours is up to each individual school (Skolverket n.d.).

English instruction in this study is therefore, as shown, limited to a few lessons each week. During these lessons the teachers focus on different aspects of the language, but one aspect many of them seem to concentrate on is repetition. Teacher B says “there is repetition all the time”, and states that she feels that repetition helps students advance their learning. Teacher C argues that repetition is key to learning vocabulary words and to developing good pronunciation. Teacher D structures many of her lessons around activities that are based on repetition in order to facilitate students’ learning, and teacher A also argues that repetition is essential for successful language acquisition.

The teachers all agree that repetition is important, but how the repetition is structured varies according to each teacher. Some teachers focus most of the repetition on prepared course-book activities, while others vary the instruction and involve different active learning situations (this issue will be further discussed under the heading Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility below). However, as mentioned above, none of the teachers (for various reasons) involve English at any other time of the day than during English lessons. None of them mention speaking English to students in the hallways, during break times, in the lunch room, or at any
other time of the day. These daily, short, and frequently occurring meetings with students could otherwise be an excellent opportunity to incorporate repetition of English. By making English part of the daily routine, students are regularly exposed to the language, have access to frequent repetition, and develop an understanding for how the language can be used in daily life.

Lundberg (2007) argues that making English a natural part of the school day is beneficial, both in order to facilitate repetition, and to make students understand that English is not just a subject one learns because it is on the schedule, but that it is a subject with an importance beyond school (p. 104). In my own work with young students of English, I, like Lundberg (p. 126), have found that if students realize they have a need of the language for some reason (for example, in order to speak with others while on vacation, to understand a computer game, to converse with relatives, or to use in their future work), their motivation to learn will be higher, and their interest and engagement in lessons will be greater.

Teachers A and E both discuss this issue in their interviews. They state that they believe that if students come to understand why they should learn English, their motivation and desire to learn will grow. In fact, teacher E elaborates on how she tries to tie all aspects of her lessons to matters that are of use or interest to the students, so that they will understand that English is a useful language to know. She states that she tries to make the content of the English lessons as authentic as possible for this very reason.

The study showed that the teachers who mention authenticity and who incorporate it during their lessons (like teachers C, D, and E, as well as teacher A to some extent), are those who have a higher level of education in English and who say they are more comfortable teaching the language. Teacher B, who repeatedly mentions her lack of abilities in English, stays true to the course-book and does not seem to aim for authenticity in her instruction. Yet again, a pattern can be detected in the results of the study, pointing toward differences between the teachers and the methodologies they use, that appears to be linked to both their knowledge of the English language and their attitude toward teaching it.

5.2.2 Utilizing various avenues to language accessibility

When instructing young learners in English, researchers emphasize that it is important to make the language accessible to students in as many ways as possible. Varying how lessons are formed and what material is used can aid in catering to many different learning styles (Lightbown & Spada 2013, p. 81) and is essential in order to keep students’ interest and enable their comprehension (Lundberg 2007, pp. 93, 124). Lindström (1998) states that an advantage to working on second language skills with young students is that the knowledge requirements in the curriculum are not as pronounced and strict as they are for older students. She argues that teachers therefore have the possibility to form their lessons in a more flexible manner, without the use of textbooks or other strict schedules (p. 19). Harmer (2007) is of a similar mind, but notes that in order for a less structured approach to be successful, it is vital that teachers not only have access to a plethora of interesting and relevant material, but also are confident enough as teachers of English to young learners to be able to take a step away from the relative comfort and security course-books might seem to offer (p. 182). Lundberg (2007) agrees and also highlights the fact that many schools do not seem to have the economic possibility to invest in new material (p. 126). All of these issues were noted in the study and will be discussed below, starting with the use of course-books.
5.2.2.1 Using course-books during lessons

Research shows that many teachers appreciate working with a course-book because they feel it ensures that students are taught the appropriate material (Çakir 2015, p. 78). Course-books help teachers know what to teach and when to teach it, providing a kind of safety net for insecure teachers (Lindström 1998, p. 35), and they provide teachers with prepared materials, allowing them to avoid spending time and effort on creating their own material (Çakir 2015, pp. 77-78). The study shows that all of these reasons for using course-books seem to be both valid and frequently occurring.

All the teachers in the study use course-books in their instruction, giving weight to Tok’s (2010) statement that course-books are the most widely used instructional materials in second language classes (p. 508). Only teacher E stated in her interview that she prefers to work without a course-book, adapting lessons to fit the needs of her individual students. Nonetheless, she has used a course-book in her instruction this year and does appreciate it for some of the reasons mentioned above. Teacher E is a confident English teacher with an advanced knowledge of the language. Still, having a course-book gives her a sense of security, she says – both as far as knowing what to teach and when to teach it, and as far as being able to justify her choice of lesson content, should someone question her. She also appreciates that so much material is prepared for her. The texts in the book she uses are divided into three levels of difficulty, making it easier for her to adapt instruction to the various abilities of her students. Tests are already prepared for each chapter, as are worksheets and other written activities, saving her time and effort.

In addition to the above mentioned reasons, teacher E also appreciates the course-book, because, she says, “If I have like this lesson that’s not a lot of input from me, it probably looks like I’m a lazy teacher who hasn’t planned my lesson, but you know what – I need some lessons like that to stay sane! I can’t have them all singing and dancing and playing bingo [all the time]”. She says that lessons that involve many resources and a great deal of creative planning on her part, are stressful, and a course-book ensures that she occasionally can take a break from it all.

Similarly, teachers A and B both say they appreciate having a course-book because it simplifies the planning of their lessons. Teacher A states that she likes to have a course-book to ensure that she is covering the appropriate content, and teacher B says she consistently bases all her lessons on the course-book. She emphasizes that without a course-book, her lack of knowledge of English would prohibit her from being able to hold English lessons at all. She says: “One would like to do so much more”, but stresses that “I am very limited to the teacher’s guide [of the course-book]”. Teacher B’s frustration is evident throughout the interview. Without the course-book it seems as though she would indeed be lost. Similarly, teacher A is not experienced as a teacher of English, and although she is fairly confident with the language itself, she is not confident with how second language instruction for young learners should be structured. It therefore appears as though course-books, as in the case of teachers B and A, really are considered a safety net by many teachers.

Teacher C also uses a course-book, but appears to have a more relaxed attitude toward it than teachers A and B. She uses it to help her in planning lessons, but gladly adds other activities as well, such as games, movies, songs, and rhymes. The interview with her did not make it clear why this is the case, but it seems likely that she probably feels confident enough as an English
teacher to take a step away from the book. She does not seem to either like or dislike the course-book in question, but mentions that the students appear to enjoy it.

In addition to the course-book, teacher C also lets students create their own English notebook, a strategy which Lindström (1998, p. 34) also advocates. Lindström stresses that this kind of a notebook can foster students’ interest in the language (p. 35), but teacher C mainly seems to like it in order to avoid having to deal with pre-printed exercise-books. She says that many exercises, in her opinion, are useless, because they are designed so that students just “sit and color” quietly, without speaking English. “What does that teach [them]?” she asks.

Analyzing the use of course-books, it appears evident that the teachers in this study all appreciate working with them to some degree. Course-books seem to make teachers in general feel more secure, and even confident teachers seem to appreciate that the books give them a safe, and calm, place to return to in their lesson planning.

5.2.2.2 Creating active learning situations

All the teachers in the study agree that varying both the content and the structure of lessons is important to keep students interested. Students are young, and their ability to stay focused on one area is limited. Therefore, all the teachers mention that variation is key. However, comparing the observations with the research background, it is evident that although the teachers all believe in variation, they find themselves restricted in how to accomplish it.

As noted earlier, Harmer (2007) states that in order to step away from the comfort and security course-books seem to offer, it is necessary that teachers have both an abundance of interesting and relevant material to use in their instruction, and that they are confident in their abilities as English teachers (p. 182). One issue many of the teachers in the study mention, is the limited amount of material available to them.

Research advocates using books and stories during lessons (see for example: Lundberg 2007, p. 96; Porras González 2010, p. 105). Teachers A, C, D, and E all do so. However, teacher A reveals that she has had to buy the storybooks with her own, personal, funds, because there is no material available at her school. Similarly, teacher C has brought in personal storybooks and magazines to use in her classroom. Teachers D and E have access to story-books at their school, but teacher E discusses a different issue in regards to the books – the fact that she does not have her own classroom but needs to go to the students’ home room to teach her lessons. She says that carrying around story-books (one for each of the 28 students in her class) becomes difficult. Students are currently reading chapter books, and 28 copies of the same chapter book is a heavy load.

Contrary to what research advocates, teacher B does not utilize books or stories in her instruction. She says that the fact that she does not feel confident in her abilities to teach English restricts her to the material that accompanies the course-books. She mentions that the school has a helpful and knowledgeable librarian, but admits that she has not actively consulted the librarian or searched for other materials at her school. She says she just does not feel confident enough to do so. Teacher B’s point of view validates Harmer’s (2007, p. 182) statement that a teacher’s confidence is of vital importance to how he/she structures her lessons, and also justifies his claim that, in order to create active learning situations, teachers need easy access to relevant material.
Research furthermore advocates using *songs and rhymes* during lessons (see for example: Lundberg 2011, p.37), which all the observed teachers do. Again, however, both the access to materials and the confidence-level of the teachers, seem to influence to what extent they use songs and rhymes. As mentioned above, teacher B is not confident. She restricts songs and rhymes to those that are present in the course-book. Teacher A is more confident in her abilities as an English teacher but she lacks access to material. She therefore uses mainly songs and rhymes from the course-book, but also includes some songs and rhymes that she knows by heart from other occasions (such as from when her own children were younger). Teacher C uses songs and rhymes from the course-book but mentions how she likes to include popular songs from the radio, CDs, or the internet as well. Like teacher C, teachers D and E also include songs and rhymes from various sources. Overall it appears as though the choice of which songs and rhymes to include is contingent upon the material available, but to an even greater extent on the teachers’ confidence-level.

Research also promotes using physical exercises, and in particular *TPR*, to facilitate early language learning (see for example: Lindström 1998, p. 31; Lundberg 2007, p. 95). Teacher C is a strong believer of TPR and argues that using their body helps students learn better. Teachers A, D, and E all agree and state that they frequently try to incorporate physical activities during lessons. Teacher B on the other hand, states that physical activities sometimes become too rambunctious and unstructured, and says that she therefore tends to limit such activities.

As noticed in teacher D’s classroom, and discussed by teacher E in her interview, the lack of space can limit the physical activities that can be included in lessons. Small classrooms and a high number of students present practical problems. Teacher D solved this problem by using a nearby, empty room, but not all teachers have that possibility. Teachers may therefore find themselves feeling prohibited from including physical activities in their instruction. Faced with issues regarding classroom space, it is likely only the most engaged, dedicated, and confident teachers will work to find a solution. Teachers with a lower level of confidence and less engagement in their teaching might see the lack of space as an insurmountable obstacle.

Finally, research advocates using *creativity and drama* (see for example: Lindström 1998, p. 32; Lundberg 2007, p. 98-99). As was the case with physical activities, teacher E voices her concern regarding the lack of space in order to be able to work with creativity and drama. The issue of space may be a contributing reason to the fact that none of the teachers seem to use creativity and drama in their instruction. Teacher C does mention trying to get her students to perform short skits when working on their communicative abilities and pronunciation, but does not appear to involve this method of teaching to a great extent. Another reason teachers opt out of using creativity and drama might be the lack of material available at the school. If teachers have to create much of their own material in order to launch an activity, they frequently seem to opt out of that activity instead.

Looking at the areas of active learning situations that research advocates, it can therefore, through the study, be concluded that Harmer (2007) has a valid point when he states that in order to be successful in using active learning situations, teachers must have access to plenty of relevant material and they need to be confident in their abilities as English teachers (p. 182). In addition, it is of importance that teachers are engaged and committed to their task in order to work with active learning situations. Teachers who are not passionate about teaching English to young learners may very well find active learning too difficult a method to use in their
instruction, and may revert to what Harmer says is the relative comfort and security of course-books (p. 182).

5.3 Conclusion
This study set out to answer the following research questions:

- What does research say are some effective methods to use in teaching young students a second language?
- What methods do English teachers of young learners in four elementary schools in southern Norrland employ in their instruction?
- Do the teachers’ methods correspond to the research findings?

What was found, was that research, above all, advocates using two recurring methodological aspects: using the target language during lessons and utilizing various avenues to accessibility. In other words, researchers emphasize that by using the language frequently in great quantities with a focus on repetition of authentic language structures using a communicative approach, teachers can help foster students’ learning. By varying their instruction and using different avenues to make the language accessible to students (like course-books and active learning situations such as stories, songs, TPR, and drama), teachers can cater to many different learning styles and foster students’ continued interest in the language as well as their motivation to learn.

The study shows that the observed teachers of young learners in elementary schools in southern Norrland attempt to employ the same methods that research advocates. However, they do so with varying degrees of success. The teachers seem to be aware of the fact that using the target language during lessons is a vital component to foster student learning. Nonetheless, the teachers’ familiarity with the language, their knowledge of how to instruct young students in a second language, and their self-confidence in their role as an English teacher, all greatly affect how they actually approach using the target language in the classroom. Those teachers who are more familiar with the language and who have greater confidence in their abilities, use the language more frequently.

The teachers’ familiarity with the English language, their knowledge of how to teach young students a second language, and their self-confidence in their role as English teachers, all also seem to affect to what extent they vary the avenues to language accessibility during lessons. All the observed teachers utilize course-books in their instruction, but those teachers who are more familiar with the language and who have greater self-confidence, also choose to create other, more active learning situations, involving for example songs, rhymes, games, and physical activities. However, all the teachers, while acknowledging that variation is important during lessons, stress that a lack of material and space restrict them in their lesson planning.

In other words, the study has shown that teachers’ methods do indeed correspond to the research findings to a certain extent. Teachers are in theory generally aware of how second language instruction should be formed for young learners, but raise concerns about how to go about implementing these methods in reality. A lack of space, time, and material is mentioned by all, and unease regarding the teachers’ own knowledge of the language and their self-confidence as teachers of English is raised by a few.

The findings of this study point to the importance of a teacher’s subject knowledge, self-confidence, and passion for his/her mission, which will be discussed in the segment on suggestions for further studies below.
5.4 Further studies
As concluded above, it would appear important that teachers of English as a second language have the passion to teach the language, as well as the appropriate knowledge and qualifications to do so. However, statistics show that this is not always the case.

In their Report of assignment regarding what proportion of instruction is conducted by qualified teachers, SNAE discloses that during the 2013/14 school year, only about 43% of active teachers in English for grades one through three were qualified (Skolverket 2014, p. 11). In another report, Promemoria – Qualified preschool teachers and teachers in schools and adult education school year 2014/15, SNAE states that the number of active, qualified teachers of English in years one through three was close to 50% by the end of school year 2014/15 (Skolverket 2015, p. 3). That is to say, the number of qualified teachers for young students only constitute about half of all those who actually teach early learners English.

Further studies are needed in order to investigate to what extent the teacher’s self-confidence regarding the English language, knowledge of the subject-matter, and passion for his/her role as an English teacher, affect young learners of English. As shown by Lundberg (2007), the teacher has an indispensable role in the language instruction of young students (p. 92), because he/she lays the foundation, not only for the students’ knowledge of English, but also for their attitude towards learning a foreign language in general (pp. 92-93 & 169). Therefore, the matter of how a teacher’s skill, self-confidence, and devotion affects students, is of utmost importance.

In connection with this issue, another area of further interest can be found. Since this study appears to show that teachers choose different methodologies based both on their language knowledge, qualifications, and self-confidence as English teachers, it would be interesting to investigate what effect the teachers’ choice of instructional methodologies have on student results. A long term study spanning several years could be implemented, examining students’ results in relation to the instructional methodologies used by the teacher.
6 References


Hello!

My name is Catharina Vick. I am a student at the University of Gävle and am currently attending my last semester of the teacher program for early elementary education (Grundläarprogrammet F-3). I have just started work on my thesis (examensarbete) which I will be writing in English. I am planning on writing my thesis about how English is taught in early elementary school in Sweden. I plan on looking at a few different elementary schools, noting the teaching methods used, and comparing my observations to relevant scientific research.

I would very much like to get in touch with one or more of the teachers who teach English in grade 3 at your school. I am hoping to get permission to come observe a lesson or two and possibly do a short interview with the teacher(s) as well. I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the possibility of me coming to visit your school. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Catharina Vick
Grundläarprogrammet f:\åk 3, distans
Appendix 2

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR:
Undergraduate thesis regarding English instruction during the early elementary school years

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW CONCERNING PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Researcher: Catharina Vick, 072-7041210, ofk12cvk@student.hig.se
Supervisor: Caroline Sims, caroline.sims@hig.se

My name is Catharina Vick. I am a student at the University of Gävle, enrolled in the Teacher Education Program for grades K-3. I am currently working on my undergraduate thesis (examensarbete) which will aim to investigate how English is taught in the early school years. As part of that thesis I am conducting a research study regarding how teachers of English in the early years design and implement their lessons. The study is aimed primarily at teachers of grades one through three with a focus on grade three, but other grades may be of interest as well. You have been asked to participate in this study because you teach English to young learners.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw at any time and you may refuse to answer specific questions in an interview. The study involves no foreseeable risk or harm to you or to your students. You are free to ask any questions about the study or about being a participant by calling me at the phone number above or by e-mailing me at the above address.

There will not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this study and you will receive no compensation for participating.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will take place:

- I will conduct an interview with you concerning your role as an English teacher. I will make an audio-recording of the interview. The interview will last between 30 minutes and one hour. I will then transcribe and analyze the interview.

Results from the study will be compiled and disclosed in my thesis. Confidentiality will be maintained. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain anonymous. Subject identities will be kept confidential as will the name of the school where you work.

You have received a copy of this consent document. By signing this consent document you agree to participate in this study.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s signature Date
Appendix 3

Interview questions for teachers

1. How long have you worked as a teacher? What ages/grades?
2. How long have you taught English? What ages/grades?
3. In which grade(s) do you teach English?
4. Are you also the mentor (main teacher) for that class?
5. What education as a teacher do you have?
6. What education do you have in English?
7. While actively working as a teacher, have you received any further training in English? What? When? How much?
8. Do you remember the English instruction you yourself received in school? How was it designed?
9. What interest do you have in English as a private person/away from your job?
10. In what grade does English instruction start at this school?
11. How was that decided? Who decided/decides that? Do individual teachers have any influence over that decision?
12. In what grade did this particular class start English instruction?
13. Is English a scheduled subject? Why/why not?
14. If yes, how does the time plan look? (How many minutes/lesson, lessons/week etc.)
15. If yes, is English present during other parts of the school day as well?
16. If no, how do you make English part of your teachings?
17. What is in your opinion, the best age to start English instruction (or any foreign language)?
20. Do you use singing and music or other esthetics in your English lessons? What? How? For what reason?
21. Do you read aloud in English to the students? Why/why not?
22. Do you give English homework? Why/why not? What? How often?
23. Do you use mainly Swedish or English during the lesson? For what reason?
24. How can one, as a teacher, motivate students to be brave enough to speak English?
25. Tell me how you, as a teacher, experience instructing young students in English.
26. Describe how you experience the students’ attitude to English. Give examples.
27. What factors do you think play a role in creating a desire and curiosity for second language learning?
28. Do you integrate English into other subjects and lessons as well? Why/why not?
29. How do you plan your English lessons?
30. Does this particular school attempt to foster students’ linguistic self-confidence in regards to English? If so, explain how.
Appendix 4

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR:
Undergraduate thesis regarding English instruction during the early elementary school years

CONSENT FORM FOR OBSERVATION OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Researcher: Catharina Vick, 072-7041210, ofk12cvk@student.hig.se
Supervisor: Caroline Sims, caroline.sims@hig.se

My name is Catharina Vick. I am a student at the University of Gävle, enrolled in the Teacher Education Program for grades K-3. I am currently working on my undergraduate thesis (examensarbete) which will aim to investigate how English is taught in the early school years. As part of that thesis I am conducting a research study regarding how teachers of English in the early years design and implement their lessons. The study is aimed primarily at teachers of grades one through three with a focus on grade three, but other grades may be of interest as well. You have been asked to participate in this study because you teach English to young learners.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw at any time and you may refuse to answer specific questions in an interview. The study involves no foreseeable risk or harm to you or to your students. You are free to ask any questions about the study or about being a participant by calling me at the phone number above or by e-mailing me at the above address.

There will not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this study and you will receive no compensation for participating.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will take place:
- I will observe one or more of your lessons. We will decide on the number of lessons together. I will then transcribe and analyze the observation(s).
  - During the observation(s) I will take written notes.
  - With your permission, I will also create an audio recording of the observation(s). Do you allow an audio recording to be made? ___________ Yes ___________ No

Results from the study will be compiled and disclosed in my thesis. Confidentiality will be maintained. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain anonymous. Subject identities will be kept confidential as will the name of the school where you work.

You have received a copy of this consent document. By signing this consent document you agree to participate in this study.

_______________________________________________  ___________________
Participant’s signature                           Date