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How Do Teachers Talk about Oral Proficiency in the ‘English C/7’
course?
A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with how teachers talk about oral proficiency in the classroom of the course ‘English C’, which has now been renamed ‘English 7’ in the new steering documents that were introduced in 2011. The aim with this qualitative study about oral proficiency, inspired by Krashen’s monitor theory, is to distinguish, through a discourse analysis, how teachers talk about oral proficiency and how they find it important for their teaching, but also how they talk about how their work is affected by the new steering documents. The data has been taken from five email-based interviews as well as from two additional interviews with the same teachers. The words such as motivation, feedback, language confidence etc. are frequently used by the teachers in the interviews made. The results show that thus the new steering documents with more focus on oral proficiency, the teachers would like to find the time to work with oral proficiency even more.

Key words: oral proficiency, teaching, steering documents.

1. Introduction

Nowadays English is one of the most spoken languages in the world (Rönnerdahl & Johansson, 2005:11). Its importance is inevitable. According to Rönnerdahl and Johansson (p. 11) “it has been suggested that as much as 99% of all communication is spoken” and by this quote we can understand the importance of spoken language. For me as a teacher of languages, spoken language is very important as it is the students’ most effective way of being able to communicate. For me, there is no point learning a language using solely textbooks or other typical classroom materials that do not develop students’ oral skills, which, realistically would be the most important language skill that students would need in real-life situations. Therefore, I found it important to investigate how teachers work teaching oral proficiency. *Oral Proficiency*: in this dissertation refers to a summary of the oral production of students. Furthermore, I find this topic even more important to look into now that the Swedish Department for Education has changed their syllabus in order to stress the importance of spoken language even more.

The Swedish Department for Education has established, in their syllabus and steering documents, various goals that stress the importance of spoken communication, both in and outside the classroom. *Syllabus* refers to the grading system established by the Swedish Department for Education, *curriculum* refers to the plan of the schooling system established by the Swedish Department for Education and *steering documents* is a collective name for the syllabus and the curriculum. As a result, teachers now have to adapt their teaching methods in order to meet these new demands from the Department for Education. Several new criteria have been introduced and these will partially change how teachers work with oral proficiency in their classes. Different teachers teach in different ways and the main aim of this dissertation is not to outline strict work methods but to find how teachers talk about oral proficiency and their work with it in accordance with the new curriculum and syllabus that have been established and introduced this year.

In this dissertation oral proficiency will be discussed, and, as this study is qualitative, it is not intended to lay a base for generalisations but to investigate how the teachers in this particular college work with oral proficiency. *College* in this dissertation refers

to non-mandatory higher education in Sweden that starts at the age of 16. In Swedish called '*gymnasiet*'.

1.1. Objective

With the new steering documents there is more focus on oral proficiency in the classroom and therefore the aim in this dissertation is to investigate with a discourse analysis how teachers talk about oral proficiency in the course named 'English C/7'. The following question will be investigated:

How do teachers talk about oral proficiency?

1.2. Limitations

In this dissertation I have chosen to look into the subject of oral proficiency. There are several courses of English at college level in Sweden but I have chosen to look into the course 'English C/7'. The reason for which only one course has been chosen is due to the fact that there is more focus on oral proficiency in the course English C/7 than in earlier courses and it would have been more difficult to overlook several courses at the same time.

1.3. Relevance

This investigation would be relevant and of interest to teachers and teacher students, as well as others working in schools. Oral proficiency, which is much more emphasized in the new syllabus, is considered important for the development of students' language. Furthermore, in real life, the importance of oral proficiency is much greater than in the classroom, as the students' communication skills will depend on the efficiency of their spoken language. In addition, more recent subjects that, for example, are discussed in the media, such as the new steering documents, are considered more relevant and of more interest by society (Denscombe, 2004). Therefore, the topic of oral proficiency is a relevant one due to the new syllabus and

marking system, which, having only recently been introduced, will also partially change the way that teachers work with oral proficiency, and this is one of the reasons why this topic has been chosen as the base of this study.

2. Background

In this chapter the aim is to map out the background the theoretical frame of this dissertation. In the background, a general view of the significance of oral proficiency and different ways to work will be outlined in order to establish oral proficiency's role in teaching.

2.1. Definition of 'Oral Proficiency'

Two different sources have been used to establish the meaning of the word 'oral proficiency' and their explanations have similar character. However, the second source outlines, in a more detailed way, the different possible meanings of the word. In this dissertation the word 'skill' will be focused on to demonstrate the meaning of the word proficiency and therefore oral proficiency focuses on the students' oral skills.

“Proficiency (noun): high degree of skill; expertise: he demonstrated his proficiency in Chinese” (The Oxford Dictionary of English, 2011).

“Proficiency (noun): skill , expertise , experience , accomplishment , competence , mastery , prowess , professionalism , deftness , adroitness , dexterity , finesse , ability , facility ; informal know-how” (The Oxford American Thesaurus of Current English, 2002).

2.2. The Importance of Spoken Language

According to Palmér (2010) oral language is students' main way of communicating and it is a very important part of their learning process. It is something that can be applied to all foreign language teaching, where the aim is for the students to develop their communicational skills, likewise in the old and the new syllabus (Skolverket, 2011). Through communication they can send and receive information, process knowledge and interpret and critically evaluate their own knowledge. Using their

communicational skills the students enhance their ability to develop other linguistic skills. Palmér (2010:38) says that “the students’ language development is the first reason for why a teacher shall focus on oral communication in the class” (n.h). In agreement with the ideas of Wiliam (2010), she also points out the importance of giving the students guidance during their school years so that they can take their language to its full potential.

Furthermore, in the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket, lpf: 1994), students’ language development is established as common responsibility for all subjects. One part of the language development is spoken language and in order to improve it students need guidance and good knowledge of their own capacity (Black & Wiliam, 2001).

2.3. Old and New Syllabus

As this dissertation concerns how teachers work with oral proficiency, a few differences between the new and old syllabus shall be mapped out, seeing as this affects the teachers work. The old syllabus is still in use (Dec. 2011) seeing as students are not given the opportunity to study the course English C/7 until their third year in college, but in two years time everyone will be using the new system. Even though the new course has not yet commenced, teachers have already had to read about the implementations of the new steering documents, as well as completing courses so they know how to work with it. Since the year 2000 schools in Sweden have used a four-scale grading system: IG, G, VG and MVG. This grading system is focused on nationally established goals; three of which stress oral proficiency. In 2011 the new syllabus was implemented and the course English C was renamed English 7 and also the grading system was changed to an A-F marking system. The new syllabus focuses on certain skills, which all students should have the possibility to develop, as opposed to the goal-driven syllabus of 2000. Furthermore, four of the criterions stress oral proficiency in the new syllabus. The Swedish Department for Education does not offer a translation of their syllabus and for that reason I have translated the goals that emphasize students’ oral proficiency (see appendix 2).

The first three goals in the new syllabus are fairly similar to the old syllabus but are worded differently. In the old syllabus it used to be: “to understand/to be able to” etc. and in the new syllabus it is focused on the students’ qualities instead, so therefore

becomes: “to have the ability to...” and as a result they change the goal from having a capacity to be able to develop one. But these are not the only changes, the most important one is the forth and new criteria in the syllabus which says: “the ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, society issues and cultural phenomenon in different contexts and in parts of the world where English is spoken” (Skolverket, 2011) (n.h). This criterion might change teachers’ work as they need to adjust to the new criteria and also continuously search for new information for students to be able to fulfil this criterion before assessment.

2.4. Different Ways to Work with Oral Proficiency

The focus on oral proficiency in the new steering documents has some implications on the teachers’ work. Different teachers work with oral proficiency in different ways but two of them are more frequently referred to and those are discussion and speech, therefore they will be explained further on in this chapter.

2.4.1. Discussions and Speeches

Discussions in small groups is a common way to work with oral proficiency (Palmér, 2010). Assignments that create discussions can be created in two different ways: open or closed. If the teacher decides to use closed questions to start a discussion they have to be prepared for more predictable right or wrong answer (Palmér, 2010). Open questions or assignments are unpredictable and primarily the answer cannot be right or wrong. The aim is to get a more in-depth answer in order to create a longer discussion. The new syllabus stresses the importance of discussion in several criterions of what the students need to have the ability to learn to be able to be assessed (Skolverket, 2011).

As human beings, the quality of our conversations and discussions are more or less dependent on our identities as a person and therefore it can be difficult to start discussions in classes with many shy students (Samuelsson & Nordgren, 2008). What does the teacher do about the shy and quiet students that do not want speak in groups, for example? All students need to show their capacity and skills of the language to be able to be assessed, and it is the teachers’ job to find a way for the student to feel confident enough to participate. Samuelsson and Nordgren (2008:182) say that it is important that “the speaking exercises cannot be too artificial, as they then become

difficult to assess” (n.h). Therefore teachers need to try to create exercises that are close to real-life-situations.

Using speeches/presentations is a common way to work with oral proficiency and this type of assignment can also cover two criterion in the new syllabus (2011): “the ability to formulate and communicate in English with written and spoken language” and “the ability to adjust its language to different purposes, receivers, and situations” (Skolverket, 2011) (n.h).

One aspect that the teacher needs to bear in mind before introducing individual assignments in oral classes is to create a good classroom climate to avoid speech anxiety. Palmér, (2010:95) suggests that teachers should give students easier task to start with and then advance. One example would be introducing shorter speeches to begin with. Another aspect that she suggests is to give the students a lot of positive feedback where the concrete elements of the performance are highlighted, as students generally tend to remember the concrete elements more than positive feedback.

2.4.2. Feedback

Feedback can support and strengthen the students’ development and learning process, but it is dependent of the quality of the feedback. According to Jönsson (2010:81) it should give the students the answer to the questions: “Where am I heading?”, “Where am I in relation to the goals?”, and “How can I reach the goals?” (n.h).

Feedback can work in two ways: one positive and one negative. According to Shute (2008) in Jönsson (2010:77) “there are studies that show that feedback should be portioned out, and preferably not contain excessive information” (n.h). With excessive information there is a risk that the students cannot handle the amount of information and then they do not know how to handle the feedback. But if the teacher gives the students the right type of feedback it will develop their language skills (Wiliam, 2010).

2.5. Theoretical Frame

The theoretical frame of this dissertation is inspired by Krashen’s theory called the “monitor theory”, which deals with how communicative skills are developed.

Krashen's monitor theory (1981) deals with the learning process of a foreign language that has its base in acquiring a language subconsciously and learning a language consciously. The unconscious acquiring is the most important factor for learning a language and it is compared to the learning process in the native tongue. The conscious learning is also called formal and informal learning (Krashen, 1981). The formal learning is described as the way students learn a new language in school. In school the rules of the language are presented to students in the shape of grammar, word order etc and the feedback they receive consists of corrections of their errors. The informal learning does not consist of these corrections or rules for the use of the language. The informal learning is more about being exposed to the language and the corrections are also used but they are not used that frequently as in the formal learning. According Krashen (1981) the informal learning process is more efficient than the formal and many times the results are better. One example of informal learning is for students to go abroad to practise their language in the natural context.

The main aim with the theory is that a language should be learned through exposure to it. Krashen (1982:58) has found that students will learn better if there is comprehensible input in the teaching. The comprehensible input means that the language the students are exposed to cannot be at a level that is too advanced for them, it has to be comprehensible. For students to develop their language they must learn a language gradually with constant input, which is a little bit above the level of the language they already have. Krashen (1982) called this 'i+1' which means input+1, and it means that theoretically it is more or less impossible to learn a language without speaking it. By only listening to a language and reading texts it would only be possible to reach a level of the language that is comprehensible, and by using the language frequently (what Krashen called output) in conversations the input is also increased. Krashen (1982:60) said: "Simply, the more you talk, the more people will talk to you".

When it comes to the communicational skills Krashen (1982:79) believe that they can be acquired subconsciously and learnt consciously and he points out that the communicational skills are important to be able to have a conversation and it is a great part of their language development. Furthermore, he claims that through a great input in the shape of exposure to the language, and through learning different rules the

communicational skills will develop. Due to this, it is out of interest to see how teachers talk about oral proficiency.

3. Method

In this dissertation the study will be qualitative and discourse analysis will be used both as a method and as tool for the analysis part of this dissertation. The scientific approach that has inspired the work will be outlined in this chapter and the method used will be described as detailed as possible.

3.1. Qualitative Study with an Inductive Approach

An inductive approach will be used in this dissertation as it is nurtured by the results from the study (Birkler, 2008). The inductive approach is not as “safe” as for example as the deductive approach but it can still show evidence of new knowledge based on the experience of teachers who have participated in the interview. Birkler (p.74) says: “We have to generalize if we want to create new knowledge” (n.h). The study in this dissertation will be qualitative as the aim is to create understandings about a certain subject (Denscombe, 2004). Bjereld, Demker and Hinnfors (2009:118) say that the interest of the researcher is to find out what quality or characteristics a subject has. The aim with this qualitative study will be to find out how teachers talk about oral proficiency.

3.2. Discourse Analysis

The method for analysis in this dissertation is discourse analysis. There are different types of discourse analysis and the one that will lay the base for this dissertation is the ethno-methodologist inspired discourse analysis. In this type of analysis the participants of the study steer the work and not the researcher (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000). Due to this, the part of the results from the study become important as it will lay the base for the categorization of the material.

To investigate beyond what is right and real in the questions in the discourse analysis is the beginning and the analysis’ aim is to study how people speak about a certain

subject (Börjesson, 2007). The aim is to analyse the social categories and identities and this will give us an understanding of how these categories are established. By dividing the findings of the study into categories we can see a reality taking shape. The discourse analysis cannot be objective because the researcher's interpretation and participation will be bias. The question is instead "how" the reality is constructed through these interpretations. Some questions can therefore be important before and after the study is made (Börjesson, 2007): 1) What is the subject of the study? 2) In what way do teachers talk about the subject? 3) How do the teachers' statements relate to each other?

Discourse analysis deals with interpretations of reality through language and context used in discourse (Jørgensen & Philips, 1999). The focus of the discourse analysis can be varied and it can be used in different areas of research (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). The reality can be interpreted in different ways within the discourse analysis and categories can be taken out and they will be found in the Results chapter 4.

3.3. Interviews

One of the methods used to obtain information, besides the literature mentioned in chapter 2. Background, in this dissertation is interviews. Firstly, five email-based interviews were handed out to different teachers of English, and due to that the method will be qualitative. The interview questions were constructed to be open so that the teachers had the possibility to express their opinions without being steered in one direction. Secondly, two interviews were also made in person with two of the teachers that had already participated in the email-based interviews, which also included additional questions that were not included in the e-mail based interviews. As the answers from the first five email-based interviews did not result in a lot of material the two additional interviews were added to give more depth to the study. In the email-based interview some of the answers were quite short and some of the teachers did not reply as thoroughly as expected.

According to Gillham (2008: 219) the questions in an interview should be open. The questions in these interviews were open because the purpose was to not steer the teachers in a certain direction regarding their answers. Additionally, it is hard to

predict how they work with oral proficiency so closed questions would not have worked as effectively in this study. There is always a risk that the “right” type of questions are not asked in an interview but these have been thought through and checked by other teachers before handed out to the teachers participating (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009: 15). The additional interviews with two of the participants have been made to give a more in-depth insight into the answers and they were constructed using one question only: How do you work with oral proficiency?

The main reason for why the teachers were selected to participate in the interviews is they all teach/recently taught the course ‘English C’. They were asked to participate in advance and they all agreed to take part in an email-based interview. The interviews were replied to in an email where they had different answers, some longer and others shorter, which affected the material. The material from the email-based interviews ended up in seven pages, which was not enough to make a good analysis. With two additional interviews with two of the teachers, Olivia and Hannah, a material of another six pages were added. The reason why Olivia and Hannah took part a second time is because they were available to do so, and because the others were not. In the chapter 4 of the Results, the answers that have been collected from the email-based interview will be referred to as written and the second additional interviews will be referred to as said, which will then show the difference in between the studies.

3.4. Material and Procedure

Emails with interview questions were sent to five teachers who teach English C at present and who will teach English 7 in the future. The email-based interview consists of eight questions, three of which deal with their professional background and the rest of the questions deal with different aspects of teaching oral proficiency. A copy of the interview questions can be found in appendix 1. Moreover, two of the teachers participating in the e-mail based interview have been interviewed in person at the college. The teachers were given one initial question: “How do you work with oral proficiency?”. A few follow-up questions were made but only as a tool to develop topics earlier stated by those interviewed. The interviews were recorded with a phone and then transcribed and categorized in chapter 4. Results.

3.5. Transcription

The interviews with the teachers in person were recorded using a phone as it is more difficult to take accurate notes while listening to the person speaking at the same time (Kvale, 1997). Afterwards they were transcribed word by word but also with pauses and other sounds uttered during the interviews (Kaiser & Öhlander, 1999). The use of recordings can be useful as the researcher can focus on what the teachers are saying and not only spend the time trying to take useful notes, as well as there is the possibility to re-listen to the material afterwards (Kvale, 1997). Even though a discourse is transcribed some things can fall out in the production of the text, and it can be difficult to show an objective translation of the words and gestures of the participants.

3.6. Processing

The interviews will be compiled and summarised in the results. In the chapter of the results the answers of the interviews will be categorized in line with the discourse analysis. The results will be categorized in to two parts, one part that deals with the results that deal with the new steering documents and one that deals with how the teachers talk about oral proficiency. The transcribed interviews will also be summarized and added to the results. Furthermore, in chapter 6. Discussion, the results from the study will be analysed alongside the theoretical aspect.

In this dissertation, the question: *How do teachers talk about oral proficiency?* will be analysed. The material will be analysed and the similarities and differences between the different teachers' statements will be categorized. According to Kvale (1997) different ways can be used make comparisons and they can afterwards be connected and distinguished to create a meaning. It can be difficult to portray the world without being subjective and there is no objective reality (Aurell, 2004). Therefore, it can be difficult to make a discourse analysis without influencing the material. A way to make the categories is to read through the material many times and try to organize the categories after looking at the piece as a whole to begin with (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). This material has been read through various times. The focus in this discourse analysis will be concentrated on what is said and not on the parts that have not been said and the categories will be organized and selected in accordance with the

objective of this dissertation. After reading the material various times several topics became visible, for example: feedback, corrections, motivation, the importance of working with oral proficiency etc. Through looking at the different topics and viewing how they relate to each other through the statements of the teachers, two categories were selected. One category that focuses on how the teachers talk about the new steering documents and one that focuses on how the teachers talk about oral proficiency by looking at which aspects of teaching they have chosen to bring up since the interview question were fairly open. The additional interviews with one sole question, brought even more specific answers as the interviews lasted for about 15 minutes with only minor interference. The answers from the interviews have brought different results. The email-based interviews have brought concrete answers to how teacher work with oral proficiency, and how they think their work will be affected by the new steering documents and the additional interviews in person gave both concrete and more abstract answers which resulted in a bigger material to analyse.

To analyse the material some of the tools suggested by Bergstöm & Boréus (2005:358) have been used:

The discourse must be limited:

The discourse has been limited, and the focus is based on two parts that are relevant to objective of the dissertation: ‘the new steering documents’ and ‘different aspects of oral proficiency’.

The selection of material used:

The material from five email-based interviews and two additional interviews has been used as the aim is to make an ethno-methodologist inspired discourse analysis which should be steered by the discourse of the participants and not by the researcher.

The question in the objective lays the ground for the discourse analysis:

The question: “How do teachers talk about oral proficiency?” in the objective of this dissertation lays the ground for the discourse analysis.

Reading the material in detail:

The material has been read through in detail various times to distinguish the two categories, and parts chosen to be dealt with in the discourse analysis. With every

reading new items of interest can be found and therefore, it is important to read through the material numerous times. With a new investigation, other items are likely to be found.

3.7. Limitations

With all investigations come limitations. Denscombe (2004:83) says “the researcher must understand the limitations of time, money and possibilities” (n.h). The limitations made in this dissertation are the selection of which course the teachers teach and the amount of teachers participating in the study. In order to get a more specific view, these teachers were chosen because they teach the course English C, which is a course that is more focused on oral proficiency as opposed to other courses of English at the college, which are not as orally-orientated.

The second limitation is the amount of teachers. The reason why there are only five teachers is because the sample is taken from just one college where they teach five different groups of English C. This group of teachers has different teaching backgrounds, age, gender and experiences from the Anglo-Saxon culture. The criterions used to choose the teachers in the study has been the relation that they all teach/ recently taught the course English C at college level in Sweden. According to Denscombe (2004: 189) “Generalisations based on representative data must be explained and motivated in relation to the strategy of collection” (n.h). Without a quantitative study it is difficult to make generalisations but through qualitative studies there are possibilities to create discussions that can be useful in other contexts. For greater generalisations a repeated study could be an option as the participants might have changed their view of the topics (Patel & Davidsson, 2003).

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity has to do with the precision in the question asked during an interview, the data that has been collected and the explanations that the researcher offers. Denscombe (2004). “The validity refers to the quality of the data and explanations- and in the believing that it concords with what is true or real” (p.124) (n.h). When making a study the researcher must make sure that s/he is investigating what s/he aims to investigate (Patel & Davidsson, 2003). When the researcher can assure this the

study has a good validity, but the study does not only need this but also it needs to be done in a reliable way, so that the reliability is good. According to Patel and Davidsson (2003) for the researcher to show good quality and reliability in the conclusions and analysis, the researcher needs to show the reader the method and ways of working in order for the reader to be able to follow the process and make their own assessment of the study's validity and reliability. This is one of the reasons for why the method is described in detail in this dissertation.

3.9. Ethics

The word ethics comes from the Greek word 'ethos' and its original meaning is "custom" or "usage" (Birkler, 2008:141) but it closely connected to the moral of research. One part of ethics considered in this dissertation is the protection of identities when it comes to the teachers participating in the study (Denscombe, 2004). The teachers will be given pseudonyms instead of their real names to keep their anonymity. When the names are replaced with pseudonyms there is a risk that the validity will be compromised because the data will not be as comparable and it will be less likely that follow up studies will be done (Denscombe, 2004). Though, in this dissertation the teacher will go under pseudonyms to not point out either their actual names or the name of the school. All the teachers are referred to as female, even though in real life this is not the case. The reason for why they are all supposed to be women is to protect their privacy. Denscombe (2004:219) says that "to mask the identities of the participants further differences of details can be applied- e.g. changes in the information of the participants roles, and possibly also their gender and age" (n.h).

Furthermore, the HFSR (2011) describes four demands on research and all of these have been filled in the process of this dissertation:

- 1) The Information Demand which means that the participants must know the aim of the study as well as they are allowed to decide not to take part in the study at any time.

- 2) The Consent Demand which means that the participants decide themselves if they want to take part and for how long they want to take part. The researcher is not allowed to put any type of pressure on the participant.
- 3) The Confidentiality Demand which means that the participants are guaranteed to be anonymous throughout the study. All material shall be handled confidentially and the participants shall be offered the possibility to take part of the material that is sensitive ethically.
- 4) The Usage Demand which means that the material of the study can only be used for research and cannot be used in commercial contexts.

4. Results

In this chapter the results of the email-based interview and the interviews in person will be put together in a summary where we will be able to view how teachers talk about oral proficiency. When the quotation is referred to as “write/writes/wrote” the material has been taken out of the email-based interviews, and when the quotations are referred to as “say/says/said” the material has been taken out of the two additional interviews made in person.

4.1. Categories

The following categories have been chosen after reading through the material various times. Both the answers from the email-based interviews as well as the answers from the interviews in person have resulted in these categories. The categories have been chosen because they show the specific elements that the teachers have chosen to bring up throughout both the email-based interviews and the two additional in person.

4.1.1. The New Steering Documents

In the interview in person with teacher Olivia, she says that “the new curriculum happens to emphasize a lot on the communicative skills”. As a result, she continues to say that “oral proficiency is quite important, and the way you work, you have to actually start from kind of a basic level and improve their confidence of course” and she also says that “the curriculum says that it should be quite descriptive and

comprehensive to start with and then the students should advance”. She also says that it is actually written in the curriculum that “they should be able to produce reasons for their opinions and things like that”.

With the new curriculum that was introduced 2011 there are some changes to the focus on oral proficiency. The teachers participating in the email-based interview write that they think the new curriculum does focus more on oral proficiency than before and that it will partially change the way they work with oral proficiency. Though the greater focus, one teacher still writes that she does not think it is enough:

I still think it is not enough focus on speaking in English. What I have learned is that students want more practice and feel that they don't know how to speak to an Englishman for example, when they are abroad. There is a lot of focus on reading, which I think is good, but for most students, reading English is not a reality, it is speaking that they really need.

Teacher Katherine in the email-based interview does not agree though as she writes: “I do not think there is more focus and I do not think it will affect my teaching”. None of the teachers Hannah, Erica and Olivia write that it does change their way of teaching that much as they already stress the importance of communication and oral proficiency. Though, they now need to highlight what is demanded of the students in another way than before but that covers most subject and parts of the language not only the English. Teachers Olivia and Erica also write that their work material will be slightly different as they have had to buy new work books that are now focused on new syllabus (2011).

Teacher Sarah would like to stretch even further and stress the importance of oral proficiency more than the new syllabus does. She writes that she would like to “work more with each student, individual feedback and actually working with each student with flow, pronunciation, dialect, intonation, and stress”. She also writes: “as the students feel like they don't sound good enough, they feel insecure about speaking with foreigners and therefore stay silent a lot”. And similar to what teacher Olivia said in her interview before she also likes to focus on building their language confidence so that the students feel more at ease to speak. Olivia says: “with more confidence it

will also be easier to work with more individual assignments, like speeches, where the person speaking is exposed”.

4.1.2. Different Aspects of Oral Proficiency

Teacher Erica writes: “to get a good oral proficiency it is good for the students to speak as much as possible in the classroom and preferably outside the classroom as well”. She also writes: “it is good to use resources like the Internet to communicate with others and through that practise their language in different kind of senses, for example fluency if they speak to friends from abroad through Skype or other services”. Teacher Katherine shows similar ideas when she writes: “a good way to learn oral proficiency is through speaking English in different situations with different people”. Furthermore, she writes that: “working with literature is a good way for the students both for discussing but also for practising vocabulary”.

Teacher Sarah writes that she likes to work with “listening and speaking together” and she points out that “the listening part is important to improve the students’ intonation and pronunciation”. She also points out the importance of letting the students speak in the classroom, “to leave them the space they need to improve their oral proficiency through practising speaking as much as possible”. The importance of practising both grammar and vocabulary to improve the students’ oral proficiency as well as listening to English in their spare-time by watching TV or listening to the radio is stressed in both the interviews. Teacher Erica writes the suggestion “listening to music and trying to remember the lyrics is also a good way”.

One of the questions in the email-based interview deals with ‘how students learn best’ and in the answers “going abroad or speaking to native speakers” is suggested to be the best ways to acquire a good oral proficiency. Due to budget-cuts, the college in question can no longer finance language exchanges abroad, therefore it depends on the students’ interests and money situation and also if they actually find time to go in their spare-time. Teacher Erica stresses it even further when she writes: “The best way is of course to go to an English-speaking country and live there for some months”.

Teacher Hannah has written a summary of how she works with the course English C:

Prepared speeches and presentations, oral homework tests, discussions in groups about texts, news or various topics, poetry, songs, quiz, plays, games, explaining words or Swedish traditions, summaries of news items or texts, descriptions of persons or a room.

Teacher Sarah also adds in her email-based interview that: “working in smaller groups improves students’ oral proficiency”, which is also something that teachers Katherine, Erica and Olivia also write that they do in class. Furthermore, they write that: “their students also work either in pairs or individually with different types of oral assignments for example speeches or book reports”. Furthermore, teacher Erica suggests that: “retelling articles, stories etc. is a good way for students to practise speaking”.

Teacher Olivia says that she gives her students both prepared and unprepared assignments because she is looking for different things in the different types of assignments. When having prepared assignments there is a great focus on the content while the unprepared ones are more focused on the language strategies that the students use to solve the assignment without preparation. During the term the type of assignment changes from more informal and personal to more formal. It also goes from simple tasks like describing a thing or situation to more argumentative types of assignments. She likes to work in smaller groups and mixing them. She says” as the teacher is the expert the students sometimes just have to agree to understand the choices the teacher makes”, even if this in some cases means that they will not sit with the same type of people or talking about exactly what they would like etc”. She also writes that: “when it comes the course of English C in particular, the demands of formality in the language is more stressed as the course is supposed to prepare the students for higher education, something the teachers need to bear in mind”. She adds to this that: “at times that means that the students need to be more steered in their learning process”. She also adds that: “the most important thing with working with oral proficiency is to work a lot and often, and that it is a constant work process that constantly has to be repeated”.

In the interview in person with teacher Hannah, she talks about how she does not prefer prepared assignments. She says: “when I studied myself that was always the

way my teachers worked but I did not feel that it was the best way to learn and therefore I like to work differently now when I teach myself". That does not mean that the prepared assignments are completely excluded from her teaching though, it just that the focus is on the spontaneous conversations. What she likes to produce is more everyday-type of conversations that are instigated by the students themselves. She says: "I like to start of with a question that is quite open, a question that the students have not been asked a lot of times before, so that they do not have a set answer from the beginning, and instead let them spin off from that". She is trying to make them talk as much as possible with as little interference from the teacher as possible. She says: "the question does not have to be true, nor the answer and they can be a bit fun and humorous, anything to motivate the students to talk about it". One example can be a question like: "Who would you have liked to be the king in England 1921?". She says: "then it is important for the students, not only to come with an answer but also that they will answer in the right way, with the right tense.

She also says: I like the students to talk about their interests, do mini-presentations, have group discussions etc. that revolves around what they find interesting so that they can speak about it freely and spontaneously, like in real life". One reason for why she does not like the prepared assignments is because a lot of times the students will focus more on the script than on their actual speaking, which is not a real life situation. She says: "You don't go to the supermarket with a script in your hand, do you?". She also stresses the importance of being able to paraphrase, something the students must know how to do in real conversations with native speakers.

One question in the email-based interview dealt with what part is considered important to have a good oral proficiency. Throughout the email-based interview answers as well as the interviews in person a few characters of what is considered "the good language" were established. Words like pronunciation, intonation, grammar and fluency were frequently used and these are the ones that describe the oral proficiency best because in lines of what the teachers said/wrote these are considered most important for a good language. Teacher Sarah wrote:

In order to be understood, you have to have the basics down, so the grammar is extremely important no matter what you do, write or speak. You also have to

have basic vocabulary in order to be understood. However, taking that away from the equation, I believe fluency is more important than having perfect pronunciation.

Teacher Erica put it this way in her written answer: “I think fluency is the most important thing, because then people will understand you even if you make some grammatical errors”. The teachers Katherine and Olivia wrote that the combination seems to be the key and the fluency is therefore considered the end product of a good oral proficiency. Hannah also points out the importance of the performance and the preparation as parts of what makes a good oral proficiency, when she uses prepared assignments in her written answer.

Teacher Olivia says: “I like to work with motivation because eventually it will build the students’ language confidence”. She says: “I like to speak to them on their own so that I can establish what they find easy and more difficult and so that I can push them in the right direction. Teacher Sarah also agrees to this when she writes: “it is important to build their confidence and making them more confident in the speaking situation”. Teacher Olivia says: “one way to work to motivate the students is to work with their interests, so you will give them experience-based assignments to start with and then move on to fact-based ones when they feel more confident in their own English”. Teacher Hannah also says she likes to work with their interests to build their language confidence. First she likes to start with asking them basic questions, and when she found out what level they are at she likes to try to motivate them with some humour and as she says: “making sure that the class is working for them... making it lively and fun”. She also says that: “it is important that the students to understand that they are all in the same boat: that it is important that they all understand that they are all there to learn”.

Teacher Olivia says: “it is important to sell your idea”. The teacher needs to use a lot of imagination and inspiration to find new way to work with oral proficiency. But as well as that it is important that the teacher has got “clear frames” when she is working so that the students can see a point with doing the assignments they need to do, and also so that they will know what will be assessed. She says: “there are two things that matters more than others when it comes to motivation: 1) the teacher must be

motivated, and 2) the students must practise similar assignments several times so that they get used to speaking English in different situations, with different people but on a regular basis". She says: "some of the students are not that used to speaking English in class or outside of class, and many of the students do not think they are that good at it even though they are in most cases". No matter what they are used to the teacher still has to motivate them to eventually be able to assess them, which is the goal of all teaching in Sweden.

Another thing that teacher Olivia mentions to create motivation is to "try to create a good atmosphere in the classroom: to create a place where the students feel like they can speak without getting judged". She says: "they need to be relaxed; they need to know that they can make mistakes". She also says: "they should understand that it should be fun to learn English", and adds that most of them also think so. After she says: "It should be the best thing in the whole world".

Teacher Hannah also adds that working the way she does might be a bit hard for the students in the beginning but that "they will soon find motivation as they are forced to participate and for everyday they speak and for every word more they say, they have learnt something new and that is the point of learning a new language. To eventually be able to communicate in the new language". To create motivation as earlier mentioned, there are a few things that are important but one thing that was not mentioned before that the teachers talked about is feedback. Teacher Sarah writes that she likes: "to work a lot with individual feedback so that the students will know what they can work with to improve their language". She writes that "usually I talk with each student outside of class where I show them a sheet with both positive and negative comments". She writes: "I would like to have the time to really work with their oral proficiency so that they can learn more of how to improve their pronunciation, flow, intonation, stress etc, but that it is difficult to find that time with every student". She also writes that: "students in general like to practise speaking more because they feel like they are not good enough in a real English speaking situation". But by working with feedback at least they will get some type of tool and direction of how to improve.

Teacher Hannah talks quite a lot about corrections during our interview. She thinks that the spoken language should always be corrected straight away as it will make them competent in speaking English. One of the reasons is because otherwise the students easily forget what error they have made. She says:

Everyone is in the same boat... and I think it is better that the teacher guides the students in the right direction for them to reach their full competence... And the corrections will effectively be a part of the students' language learning and give them the possibility to work on the things they yet haven't learnt... For example, if they keep saying the wrong tense I'll keep giving them corrections until they have learnt how to use that specific tense. And of course, I would explain to everyone how the tense is used. A few minutes later I would come back to that and ask one of my students a question to do with that tense...to make sure they have understood and remembered. I find it important to correct students straight away after every mistake because if they say something incorrect and nobody corrects them, they will think it is correct, especially if a teacher corrects some errors and not others. I don't want students to start learning bad English because if they never know it is wrong...it will become harder and harder for them to overcome that error the longer it takes for them to find out that it is wrong.

Teacher Olivia does not like to work in the same way as Hannah. She likes to give the students feedback straight after their performance but not during. She says: "I stay away from giving them corrections of their pronunciation as they just pronounced the words; I rather wait until the end of the class and bring up the common errors of the group". The reason for this is because she thinks "correcting the students in front of the class makes them nervous and embarrassed, but if the group is small and they know each other well and are confident then it is possible to correct errors straight away". She says: "it is important for the students to know what errors they are doing, especially if there are errors that they keep repeating, otherwise they will never learn how to change them". But she also says "a lot of times when teaching, there is more focus on getting the message through but in the course of English C/7 it is important to demand correctness in the language of the students and to point out how to make certain sounds, the content of a discussion, and variety in the language etc. as there are higher demands in the syllabus of the course".

Teacher Sarah writes in her answers that: “listening and practising dialects and accents is a way to work with the students’ oral proficiency”. She points out that “especially important is the difference in between British and American accents as the students a lot of times do not even realise the difference in pronunciation when they speak themselves”. Erica writes that: “a way to make the students to listen more to the language to learn more about oral proficiency is for the teacher to always speak in English, regardless of the situation, so that the students constantly hear the language as well as it might motivate them to take some initiative to speak themselves”. The other teachers express themselves in similar manners when it comes to speaking in the class. Teacher Erica also writes that the students should speak more English during class so that they “practise, practise, practise”.

Teacher Olivia says she thinks it is important that the students “find their own personal English”. They need to try how to pronounce words in different ways to find their own way and they need to try American and British accents, or other accents, so that they can see what suit them best. She says” they have to understand that a good accent demands a lot of work and effort”. In class the students tend to like speaking English and Olivia goes as far as to say: “90 % of the students are really liking this and there are kind of obvious reasons for that with the games and the music or whatever, so we are kind of lucky, being English teachers”. When talking about oral proficiency she says:

it is important that the students should sound English of some type. The students need to find their role in English, and it becomes a bit of a game for the student to find its own personal English. On their way to find it the teacher has to interfere a bit to tell them what sounds good or bad and eventually they will step out of their *Swenglish* and find their own personal English.

One way for the students to find their English faster is for them to listen and speaking English a lot and often but she also says: “a good atmosphere is important”. She says:

the classroom needs to have an atmosphere where there is room for making mistakes and trying their own style, sounds and accents out without feeling pressure or discomfort. From listening and speaking to others the students can also learn a lot about both the others’ language as well as their own. They can

often find their own way and learn through the others instead of only working on their own.

5. Discussion

In this chapter the result from the study will be analysed with the theory mapped out in the beginning of the dissertation. From reading the answers in the results various times categories have been organized in the results and in this part they will be put together with the theory, as well as the method will also be discussed in this chapter.

5.1 Discussion of the Method

The method with qualitative interviews is appropriate to the question of: “How teachers talk about oral proficiency?” but if the focus would have been solely on their work methods a study with observations would have been preferential but also more time demanding.

When starting to write this dissertation the method of using email-based interviews with five selected teachers seemed very good. But in retrospect, it would have been preferential to have made five interviews in person instead as the two additional interviews resulted in about the same amount of material as the first five email-based interviews. From the answers that have come out of the different types of interviews, the material has still been big enough to draw conclusions of how the teachers talk about oral proficiency and its importance in the class.

The email-based interviews were sent out and a few of them were sent back a few weeks after the originally set dates, and it was also these interviews that resulted to be least useful. But the other ones were useful and the ones made in person even more. The interviews were made at the college where they work and the atmosphere was good and their answers satisfying. The validity of the study would have been better with more interviews in person as they would have been more likely to result in more detailed and specific answers.

5.2. Discussion of the Results

5.2.1 How Do Students Learn Oral Proficiency Best?

To answer the questions for the purpose of this dissertation, it is of interest to understand how teachers think that students learn oral proficiency best and what work methods they find important for the students' language development. The teachers in the study are not completely on agreement of what is considered most important for a good oral proficiency. According to the new syllabus it does not say clearly that one part is more important than another but it does say that the students need to adjust their language to different purposes, and they need to show the ability to communicate as well as discuss in the target language. This does not necessarily mean that they need to have a good fluency or an excellent grammar which are the parts emphasized by the teachers in the study.

When it comes to how the students learn oral proficiency best the teachers have different ways to view it. The teacher Olivia talks a lot about the importance of building the students' language confidence. Olivia says she likes to work step by step with the students. Krashen (1982) has a theory ($i+1 = \text{input}+1$) which means that he thinks that students learn best through learning just a little bit more all the time. By adding a level of difficulty that is not too far away from what the students already learnt they will be pushed to stretch just a little bit further all the time. Palmér (2010) suggests teachers to use the same method, especially when it comes to oral proficiency as it builds the students' confidence up. This can be applied to the teaching of oral proficiency, and all other teaching as well, where the students need to get harder assignments to develop their skills in a subject. By thinking about how the students learn best the teachers can develop trials and test that focus on these exact parts. Krashen also argues that: "by only listening to a language and reading texts it would only be possible to reach a level of the language that is comprehensible" and therefore it can be argued that the importance of a good oral proficiency is altered.

Two of the teachers speak about corrections and they have different ways to work with them. Teacher Hannah considers it important to correct the students straight away for them not to forget what errors they have made, this so that they can work on

them and improve. But Olivia suggests that if a teacher corrects the students straight away they might feel embarrassed and they will therefore be more reluctant to speak instead of motivated. The teachers are not always on agreement of which way is the best for the students to learn even if they in many other cases are. Krashen (1982) means that in school the rules of the language are presented to students in the shape of grammar, word order etc. and mostly, the feedback the students receive consists of corrections of their errors made during class and this is in line with the ideas of both Hannah and Olivia. The informal learning does not consist of these corrections or rules for the use of the language to the same extent. The informal learning is more about being exposed to the language and the corrections are also used but they are not used that frequently as in the formal learning. Furthermore, Krashen (1981) claims: “through a great input in the shape of exposure to the language, and through learning different rules the communicational skills will develop”.

One way suggested to learn oral proficiency is going abroad to practise the language. This way is also empathized by Krashen (1981) as he means that the students learn best in a natural context through informal learning. He means that the exposure to the language is an important part, which is also connected to what some of the teachers said about always speaking English during class.

5.2.2. How Do Teachers Work with Oral Proficiency?

The teachers participating say that they all do work a lot with oral proficiency and that it will not change their manner of teaching that much. One of them does not think it will change her way at all, even though there are changes in the syllabus. What can be highlighted with this syllabus is that the actual grading process will change from the former IG-MVG to a new scale with A-F which is more similar to other countries' grading systems. With the new syllabus it is more specific for each mark what is demanded of the students, and there are more variables for the teachers to take into consideration. For example to receive a mark now the students need to be tested various times on each specific element, as oral proficiency. For this new ways of measuring the students' skills will be needed and the teachers will have to change their work methods to some extent.

The majority of the teachers said they use speeches and discussions to work with their students. When asked how they work with oral proficiency the answers were fairly similar, with some minor differences. Palmér (2010) suggests that the students receive easier tasks to start with and then advance in accordance with the opinions of several teachers and that is also highlighted by the teachers. Another way to work with oral proficiency can be to give the students unprepared assignments where they really show their competence when it comes to speaking as they have not rehearsed before they are given the assignment. One of the teachers suggests that working with unprepared assignments is one of the best ways as it creates spontaneous conversations and that it is good to work that way from the start so that the students get used to it from the beginning. One of the other teachers says that the students should start with easier tasks instead and build up their confidence before doing unprepared assignments. She thinks it is better when the students can take initiative themselves to start a conversation and that it takes some time before they are at that point.

The teacher Hannah points out that the students should work with real-life situations in class and as she suggests that the students cannot bring a script with them for example to the supermarket. Samuelsson and Nordgren (2008:182) say: the speaking exercises cannot be too artificial, as they become difficult to assess". This does not only apply to the assessment, the students need to work with more real-life situations to be able to handle them when they actually speak with native speakers, something that both the teacher Hannah and Sarah point out. Palmér (2010) mentions that with group discussions the questions can be made differently: open or closed and where the open ones are to prefer if the teacher is looking for discussions with more depth. Hannah also suggests that giving the students group assignments where they work with open questions that are not one-answer only makes them practise real-life situations as they cannot prepare their answer in advance.

5.2.3. Motivation

Another topic that the teachers talked about was motivation. Some of them stressed the importance of motivating the students so that they all feel like they have enough confidence to take part and participate in trials and assignments that they earlier thought were difficult. When the teacher manages to create motivation the students'

results enhance. Motivation is many times affected by the students' interests and Nordgren and Samuelsson (2008) mean that the course of a discussion is at many times determined by the identities of the students. Teacher Olivia suggests that working with the students' interests will help them to advance in the classroom and that it will motivate them more.

Motivation and confidence can prevent speech anxiety that was also mentioned by the teachers in the study. Palmér (2010) suggests that teachers work in small groups and with smaller assignments to prevent speech anxiety but in the course of English C/7 that can be difficult as the demands are higher in the syllabus. Teacher Sarah writes "as the students feel like they don't sound good enough, they feel insecure about speaking with foreigners and therefore stay silent a lot". It also applies to the class where the students that are insecure about their oral proficiency tend to not speak as much as the others. In the course of English C/7 the teachers in this school demand that the students make at least one speech in class in addition to another test in the examinations assessed by the Swedish National Test for Speaking, and therefore it is important that they are well prepared and motivated enough to make a good performance. When they perform their speeches the teachers must be observant of their skills and their knowledge of a good spoken language as the content of the speech is not the only part that is important for the assessment. One criterion (Skolverket, 2011) that can be applied to that type of assignment is "the ability to adjust its language to different purposes, receivers, and situations". The teacher has to make assignments that meet these requirements.

Palmér (2010) and Wiliam (2010) stress the importance of guidance in their works for the language development of the students. Several of the teachers also mention the importance of giving good and constructive feedback for the students to know how to improve their oral proficiency. Teacher Olivia says: "the teacher is the expert and for the students to improve they need to trust the teacher and believe in its competence". When the students receive feedback and guidelines of improvement they are more likely to feel motivated as they know what to do to become more competent speakers. With the motivational guidance students are more likely to reach their full potential. Black and Wiliam (2007) stress that the students need guidance and good knowledge of their own capacity to improve.

5.2.4. Teachers' Attitude towards the New Steering Documents

The teachers involved in this study have discussed oral proficiency in their answers in email-based interviews in addition to interviews in person. Their opinions on the topic have been varied and some of them reason that there are noticeable changes in the new syllabus in contrast to the old one. One teacher does not agree to this, and the reason for this could be that she has not read enough about the syllabus in order to give a validated opinion about the topic, or that the new syllabus actually does not affect her teaching very much. Another teacher thinks that there are great differences and that it will change the way of teaching, assessing and use of work material and trials. With the new syllabus there is greater focus on the oral proficiency and the focus on the students have changed from a "goal to reach" to "having the possibility to develop" certain skills. As a lot of the literature used in the schools are based on the old syllabus (2000) the school now has to buy new material according to one of the teachers, which will also change their way to teach slightly if they base parts of their teaching in the work books. Several of the teachers also point out that the new syllabus requires more of the teachers as they focus on the students possibility to develop certain skills with the teaching they have been offered.

One criteria that affects their work more than others is: "the ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, society issues and cultural phenomenon in different contexts and in parts of the world where English is spoken" (Skolverket, 2011) (n.h). This criteria demands of the teachers that they look into specific cultural contexts that might not be in the text books, not that they should only base their teaching in that but it is quite common that a lot of the teaching is based in text/work books, and that they have to actively search for information about current events. Olivia says: "the students' own interest for culture in the shape of music and movies can be helpful for working with this". Both she and Hannah say that working with the interests of the students is a good motivator which can be combined with this new criterion in the syllabus, as the students can bring the culture with them to school.

Based on what has been said in the emailed-based interviews the reaction to the new syllabus is positive because many teachers do want more focus on the oral proficiency than before. One of the teachers specifically writes that she would have liked to have even more time “to focus on the oral proficiency” and with higher demands in the syllabus it would be more likely that teacher would work with it more. The teacher writes that she would have liked to have more time with each student so that she could give each student the feedback they would need to really be able to develop their language further. With the lack of time for each student now it can be difficult to give each student the time they need.

As stated before, most of the teachers are positive to the new syllabus and they are aware of the changes that come along with it. One thing that comes to the mind of the teachers is the new Swedish National Test for Speaking. The former speaking tests have been used as a base for assessment for several of these teachers. In the test the nationally established requirements for assessment can be found and therefore several of the teachers find it useful as matrix during the rest of the year. Right now the curiosity of what will be new elements in the new test is quite big, as it will help them with their assessment procedure. As well as it will give them a bit more clarity of what will be assessed and focused on. One of the teachers point out that when you work with oral proficiency or any other parts of the English language you have to be able to change your way of teaching. With the new steering documents some changes will have to be made but as a teacher it is important to always be able to find new ways and angles to make the teaching more interesting and varied.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter the results of the study will be summarized and suggestions for future research will be made.

The teachers have talked/written about oral proficiency and how they work with oral proficiency in the classroom has been brought up. Almost all the teachers state that they work with it frequently because they find it to be a very important part of their teaching. The way the teachers work is quite similar in many ways but they all highlight different areas that can be difficult at times, for example how they work

with motivation, new ways to make the teaching more interesting, the new steering documents, feedback and corrections etc.

One part that can be highlighted is the importance of working with the students' confidence when it comes to speaking. The teachers have to try to motivate the students to speak and work with the people who are shy so that they can take part of the class like the others. Several of the teachers bring up the importance of working with the students' confidence in different ways to motivate them to take initiative themselves which is stated in the steering documents.

Though the new steering documents highlight oral proficiency, several of the teachers still do not think there is enough focus. There are teachers that say they always have to think of working more with oral proficiency in the classroom, but factors such as time can be an obstacle. If there would have been more time for oral proficiency some of the teachers would have liked to work more individually with the students in order to guide them in a more personal manner so that they can improve faster and more efficiently.

To conclude this dissertation; the main aspect that is considered important when it comes to oral proficiency is to work with it a lot and often. When students work a lot and often, they get used to speaking in front of others in different situations and with different people. When creating a good atmosphere in the classroom students will build up confidence and they are therefore more likely to be more competent speakers of English. Last but not least, as a teacher it is always important to find new ways to work with oral proficiency. The teacher has to be open to trying new things in order to motivate their students.

6.1. Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for follow-up studies could be a repeated one but otherwise it would also be of interest to look into what opinions teachers would have on the new grading-system. Do they find it better and clearer with the new syllabus after working with it for some time? Another study that would be of interest could be to investigate how teachers work with assessing students' work with oral proficiency in the class room.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to read a study about how motivation affects the students' performance when it comes to oral proficiency. Hopefully this study can lay the ground for further research.

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Appendix 1

Oral proficiency

1. How long have you been working as a teacher?
2. What type of degree do you have?
3. What levels of English do you teach?
4. How do you work with oral proficiency in the classroom?
5. How do you think the students learn oral proficiency best?
6. Do you think there is more focus on oral proficiency in the new curriculum/
syllabus than the old one?
7. If so, how does that change your way to teach oral proficiency?
8. Which part do you consider most important for a good oral proficiency?
Fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, formality? Other?

Appendix 2

Old syllabus (2000)

Since 2000 the schools in Sweden have used a grading system with four scales: IG, G, VG and MVG. This grading system is focused on nationally established goals, whereas three of these stress the oral proficiency. The Swedish Department for Education do not offer a translation of their syllabus and for that reason I have translated the goals that empathize the students' oral proficiency.

Translation of English C (2000)

Goals that the students shall have reached after finished course.

The student shall:

understand different types of authentic speech in different contexts.

be able to in different contexts start and actively participate in the communication of varied style and be able to use English flexibly and in a appropriate manner in both formal and informal contexts.

be able to inform orally in a structured way (n.h)

New syllabus (2011)

2011 the new syllabus was implemented and the course English C was renamed to English 7. The new syllabus focus on the skills that the students shall have the possibility to develop in difference to the goal-driven syllabus of 2000. Furthermore, four qualities stress oral proficiency in the new syllabus.

Translation of English 7 (2011)

The teaching of the course English 7 shall offer the students the possibility to develop the following skills:

an understanding of spoken and written English as well as the ability to interpret the content.

the ability to formulate and communicate in English in the written and spoken language.

the ability to adjust its language to different purposes, receivers, and situations.

the ability to discuss and reflect about living conditions, society issues and cultural phenomenon in different contexts and in parts of the world where English is spoken (n.h).