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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give a description of the communicativity in a foreign language classroom and also of students' communicative behaviour.

Since the beginning of the 80s communication has been widely discussed as one of the main features in instructed language learning. The focus on form, that traditionally has been dominant in the language classroom, was combined or even replaced by focus on meaning and situations similar to authentic learning settings. Immersion classrooms were created to fulfil this need for natural communication and students learned the new language by using it as a means to communicate other subjects. After some time, however, several studies in the immersion classrooms showed that although the students' communicative competence was highly developed, their grammatical skills did not measure up to those of a native speaker (Harley & Swain 1984). The traditional methods, however, did not provide students with the communicative skills that are necessary for the use of their second language outside the classroom. It is therefore necessary to find a balance between authentic communication and instruction in the classroom for the students to reach the highest possible level of L2 proficiency. Typical behaviours in traditional instruction are error correction, simplified input and a limited range of language discourse types while in more communicative settings, meaning is emphasized over form with a limited amount of error correction as a result, input is simplified by the use of contextual cues and a larger variety of discourse types is used (Lightbown & Spada 1993).

The teaching situation in Swedish upper secondary schools (senior high school, Swedish *gymnasium*), as far as foreign languages are concerned, is still quite traditional in many places and there is generally a lack of authentic communication, even though the curriculum emphasizes the importance of communicative competence and intercultural understanding (Skolverket

1996). The purpose of this study is, therefore, to describe communication in these classrooms and establish the students' communicative behaviour.

In the classroom, several different kinds of activities occur where communication varies considerably. Typical activities will, therefore, be categorised with the intention to describe the students' communication as distinctly as possible. It is also relevant to compare the communicative level in these different groups of activities as it will be of importance in future studies of the role of communication in the acquisition of a foreign language.

The method that has been used for this purpose is an observation scheme referred to as COLT. The scheme has been adjusted for the present study as its original intention did not include the categorisation and comparison of different classroom activities.

Background to COLT

COLT stands for *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching* and was introduced for the first time in 1984 by Nina Spada, Maria Fröhlich and Patrick Allen. This observation scheme was developed within the context of a project investigating the nature of L2 language proficiency and its development in classrooms, referred to as the Development of Bilingual Proficiency (DBP). One of the research components in this project was to investigate the effects of instructional variables on learning outcomes which required an observation scheme that could systematically describe instructional practices and procedures in different L2 classrooms. Furthermore, one of the main questions was whether instruction which was more or less communicatively oriented contributed differently to L2 development. An observation scheme was, therefore, needed to describe the exact features of instruction.

Description of COLT

The COLT scheme is divided into two parts, the first of which describes classroom events at the level of episode and activity and the second part analyses the communicative features of verbal exchange between teachers and students and/or students and students.

COLT Part A

TIME	ACTIVITIES	PARTIC. ORGANIZATION							CONTENT							
		Class			Group		Indiv.		MAN.		LANGUAGE				OTHER TOPICS	
		T s/c	S s/c	Choral	Same	Different	Same	Different	Procedure	Discipline	Form	Function	Discourse	Sociolinq.	Narrow	Broad

CONTENT CONTROL			STUDENT MODALITY					MATERIALS							
								Type				Source			
Teacher	Teacher/Stud.	Student	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Text Minimal	Text Extended	Audio	Visual	L2-NNS	L2-NS	L2-NSA	Student-made

COLT Part B

STUDENT VERBAL INTERACTION

	TARGET LANG.				INFORMATION GAP					SUST. SPEECH				FORM RESTR.			REACT FO/MES		INCORPORATION of S/T UTTERANCES						
					Giving Info.		Request Info.																		
Discourse init.	L1	L1 Translation	L2	Not codable	Pred.	Unpred.	Pseudo	Genuine		Minimal	Phrase	Clause	Sustained	Choral	Restricted	Unrestricted	Form	Message	Correction	Repetition	Paraphrase	Comment	Expansion	Clarif. request	Elab. request

Part A

Each activity and episode is timed so that a calculation of the percentage of time spent on the various COLT features can be determined. The COLT scheme differs between activity and episode, the latter of which is part of an activity but yet has different features from other episodes in the same activity. Since group activities differ a great deal from those that are led by a teacher, COLT makes this distinction with the category referred to as 'Participant organisation'. Group work is regarded as an essential part in the development of communicative competence. Research has shown that there is a lot more negotiation of meaning between students, and also that they are more willing to take initiatives than when a teacher is in charge of the interaction (Rulon & McCreary 1986).

Focus on form or on meaning is an important division in communicative language teaching. The category 'Content' is, therefore, a natural part in the COLT scheme under which the original intention was to establish focus and see whether this led to differences in L2-development. Apart from grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc., which all go under form, focus may also be on communicative acts (function), how sentences combine into cohesive sequences (discourse) or on forms or styles (sociolinguistics). 'Other topics' represent the subjects that are dealt with in the classroom. These are divided into narrow and broad subjects depending on their range of reference. Narrow are those subjects that refer to the classroom and the students' immediate environment and experiences while subjects beyond this are classified as broad. The 'Content' part can, however, be somewhat arbitrary. If the activity is an interview, for instance, focus might be on the narrow subject with which it is important for the students to get familiar. The interview might also be, however, an exercise in how to ask questions and an aim for correct linguistic forms. It is possible that all three features are equally important, but there is also a possibility that the teacher only had one of these features in mind for the exercise. In some cases it might, therefore, be necessary to ask the teacher what his/her intentions were with that particular exercise.

For students to take initiatives and being involved in their learning have been argued, in communicative language teaching, to contribute positively to learning. 'Content control' shows the proportions of this feature.

An argument in the literature is also that the students' different skills practice should be integrated to reflect a more authentic use of language. So 'Student modality' was developed in COLT to determine if differential focus on the skill areas had any influence on the learners' use of the same skills. Many of the classroom activities include combinations of skills, for instance,

where students are expected to both listen to the teacher or to a tape and speak themselves.

Finally, COLT consists of a material part. Communicative language teaching literature has introduced different theories about this. On the one hand, authentic material is important so that the students are prepared to deal with 'real' language outside the classroom. On the other hand, simplified input has been shown to increase the ability to understand. COLT differs between minimal and extended text, where minimal texts include such things as isolated sentences and word lists whereas extended texts include stories, dialogues and connected sentences.

For the analysis of part A, the use of check marks at those features describing the activity or episode makes it possible to get an overall picture of each event in the classroom. The marking of time is important as each feature is calculated against the total amount of time. Not all activities consist of an exclusive focus on one category, but might also involve other features. The analysis is then only concerned with the primary focus unless two or more categories are equally focused, which have to count as a combination of features and constitute a separate category.

Part B

The second part of COLT analyses communicative features of verbal exchange and is divided into teacher verbal interaction and student verbal interaction. As the present study deals with students' communicative behaviour and does not look closer into the teacher's speech, the teacher verbal interaction part is not included in this description.

Each of the students' utterances is marked in terms of the target language. The original COLT scheme has two alternatives, first language (L1) or second language (L2). A third alternative is desirable, however, namely L1 translation. Since target language is meant to show how often the students use their first language instead of trying in their second language, situations where students are demanded to translate an L2 utterance cannot be included in these counts.

Utterances which are not codable also need to be marked so that it is possible to get an idea of how many utterances the students actually make during a lesson. This category is, therefore, added to the scheme.

An important difference between a 'natural' discourse and a classroom discourse is that in the former there is a high degree of unpredictability. Speakers do not typically ask questions to which they already know the answer, which is quite a common phenomenon in the classroom. This might

result in students not being particularly motivated to engage in a classroom discourse. Under 'Information gap' COLT differs between giving predictable and unpredictable information, and between asking pseudo questions (knowing the answer before asking the question) and genuine questions.

To measure amount of speech, COLT includes three categories: ultra-minimal, minimal and sustained, where sustained speech consists of at least three main clauses. The present study, however, indicated that this division was too wide. Very few student utterances could be regarded as sustained speech. The categories used in this study are, instead, minimal speech (one or two words), phrase, clause and sustained speech, which is at least one main clause with extension.

It has been argued that a creative and uncontrolled language use, just like the one in L1 development, is also crucial in classroom language learning. 'Form restriction' measures this dimension.

Two additional categories, 'Reaction to form or message' and 'Incorporation of s/t utterances' have been disregarded in the present study as they are not relevant to the students' communication but rather to the teacher.

Part B is analysed according to each activity or episode. Check marks are counted and divided with total amount of marks in the same group.

Collection of material

The data were collected in three different Swedish upper secondary schools, where the students attended their first year. All three classes are considered to represent traditional teaching. The students were about 16 years old and had approximately four years of study of French as a foreign language. Ten lessons, totalling 10 hours, were video recorded in each class, 8 of which were transcribed and used for the analysis. The first lessons were needed to make the students feel comfortable with the video camera and myself. A tape recorder was also used to complement the video camera in case the sound was not sufficiently recorded. For the present study only students' utterances have been analysed, that is a total of approximately 2,000 utterances.

Classification of activities

One of the main purposes of this study is to show the differences between various activities in the classroom. A lot of research has been done in comparing classrooms according to the frequency of different types of interaction which occur in each setting. The immersion classroom in relation to the foreign language classroom, for instance, resembles natural environment much more because of its focus on meaning instead of form and the many opportunities for negotiation of meaning (Ellis 1985). A foreign language classroom is, however, not focused on form throughout but is rather a mixture of activities where focus varies according to the features of the activity. It is, therefore, important to state what kind of activities are involved in the classroom investigated.

A lesson may vary a lot between classes and also within the same class, activities with the same aim of learning can be performed in numerous ways. Thus, it is not an obvious task to divide the different activities into categories. One feature which is fairly distinctive though is what the teacher's intention is with a particular activity. The teacher may focus on form, that is talking about the language and paying attention to how it is construed. The opposite is focus on meaning, where language in itself is not as important as what is actually said. However, all activities cannot be included in these two extremities; activities in the classroom are often a mixture of focus on both form and meaning. Even though this division tends to be arbitrary, it clearly points out the main differences of classroom events.

Hence the categorisation of classroom activities in the present study is as follows:

Focus on grammatical form (F)
Focus on vocabulary (V)
Focus on form with communicative practice (FCP)
Focus on form in a communicative context (FCC)
Focus on meaning (M)

As is mentioned above, focus on form indicates the exploration of the language. What is said is not important, often the utterances used for examples are adapted for their purposes and not very natural. Vocabulary would normally go under form, considering that this is also looking at the language. In this study, however, it is necessary to treat vocabulary as a separate category because of the fact that it differs considerably from the others. When grammar is discussed in a foreign language classroom, this is commonly done in the students' first language to avoid unnecessary difficulties. Practising

vocabulary, however, is obviously done in the foreign language. As the use of L1 is a typical feature of form-focused activities, the results would be misleading if vocabulary were to be included in this category. Vocabulary practice is also a very similar event in many classrooms, which again motivates it as a separate category. 'Focus on form with communicative practice' has form as its major target, but uses sentences and interaction to explain and practice form. In 'focus on form in a communicative context', on the other hand, it is rather interaction that is dominating the activity. The interaction, however, is not open but rather directed towards a specific grammatical phenomenon by the teacher. The students do not necessarily know that they are being taught grammar. Finally, focus on meaning gives the students opportunities for communication without having to concentrate on the correct forms. Usually teachers do not correct grammatical errors in these situations. Focus on meaning has been divided into personal and academic. The reason for this is that these two categories differ in some respects. A personal interaction is usually an open topic where teacher and students talk about the immediate environment, themselves, etc. and also where students have opportunities to initiate the discourse while an academic interaction is more directed by the teacher and deals with more difficult topics.

Results

Part A

The results in part A are based on a total of 480 minutes (8 lessons) in each class. The figures in tables 1-14 show percentage of total amount of time spent on each category.

As can be seen from tables 1 and 2, whole class activities dominate in all three classes. This suggests a fairly traditional teaching method where the teacher is in charge of the events in the classroom. The creators of COLT suggested group work as representing a communicative classroom (Spada & Fröhlich 1995). Students are here encouraged to 'negotiate meaning' and do not focus as much on the accuracy of utterances. Another reason for group work being more communicative might be the fact that many students feel insecure speaking in front of a lot of people. In a smaller group they also get more time to express themselves in their own ways, the fact that the teacher does not listen all the time creates a more relaxed atmosphere.

Individual work is not very common in either of the classes, which might be explained by the fact that the students work individually at home with different exercises. The amount of homework may vary, but it is usually

Table 1. Participant organisation by class.

	Whole class	*Group*	*Individual*	*Group/Indiv*	*Total*
Class 1	73,24	22,00	0	4,76	100
Class 2	64,08	15,74	8,65	11,53	100
Class 3	95,15	4,22	0,63	0	100

Table 2. Participant organisation, total.

	Whole class	*Group*	*Individual*	*Group/Indiv*	*Total*
	77,82	13,76	3,07	5,34	100

Table 3. Content by class.

	Managem.	*Lang.*	*Other top.*	*Lang/Other top.*	*Other*	*Total*
Class 1	2,49	53,06	38,55	4,99	0,91	100
Class 2	1,56	40,72	57,27	0	0,45	100
Class 3	0	36,85	47,81	14,54	0,80	100

Table 4. Content, total.

	Managem.	*Lang.*	*Other top.*	*Lang/Other top*	*Other*	*Total*
	1,29	43,24	47,91	6,83	0,73	100

distributed once a week. The actual class time is instead spent on whole class activities and group work.

Whole class activities mainly consist of the teacher's interaction with one or several students; very rarely students get to lead the activity. This is a common feature for all three classes. Also choral work is a fairly rare event in the classroom.

As could be expected, management forms a very small part of the teaching (shown in tables 3 and 4). This is usually a directive to the students or some disciplinary statements from the teacher. Spada & Fröhlich 1995 include management in the group of features that represent a more communicative classroom since focus here is on meaning rather than on form. This, however, is questionable as a communicative classroom should contain communication between students and teacher or between students, and giving a directive or a statement is rather a monologue from the teacher which does not necessarily demand any participation on the students' part. Management, therefore, is a source of input rather than an invitation to communication. 'Other topics', on the other hand, must be regarded as a communicative feature as focus is on the topic and students are encouraged to interact. As table 3 and 4 show, communicative attempts are made quite frequently by focusing on a particular

Table 5. Other topics by class.

	Narrow	*Broad*	*Total*
Class 1	21,76	78,24	100
Class 2	27,73	72,27	100
Class 3	51,25	48,75	100

Table 6. Other topics, total.

	Narrow	*Broad*	*Total*
	34,68	63,32	100

topic. A lot of time is also spent on the language where almost all attention is on form. Traditional grammatical exercises mix with lectures about the structure of the language. Teachers also have the possibility to combine focus on language and focus on topic which, according to Spada & Fröhlich 1995, also contributes to a communicative classroom. This is not a very common feature though; usually attention is drawn to either of the two main aspects.

Consequently, the three Swedish classrooms contain a mixture of typical communicative features and traditional grammar teaching. Another interesting aspect for communicative purposes is what kind of topics are being considered. The COLT scheme separates narrow from broad topics where the former is restricted to the students' immediate environment. Both involve focus on meaning and are thus sources of communication, but the amount of communication they generate may vary. On the one hand, narrow subjects contain a more familiar subject and thus include easier vocabulary, but on the other hand, broader subjects like news, political problems, etc. might be more interesting and, therefore, inspire students to speak. As is shown in table 5 and 6, broad subjects seem to dominate, except in class 3 where a lot of narrow subjects are treated. The choice between broad and narrow subjects is something that the teacher needs to adapt to his/her students. If a broad topic includes too many difficult words, this might contribute to a loss of interest by the students and thereby not generate any communication. In this case a more narrow topic might be much more successful.

Table 7. Content control by class.

	Teacher	*Teacher/Stud*	*Student*	*Total*
Class 1	74,84	25,16	0	100
Class 2	78,71	21,29	0	100
Class 3	88,82	11,18	0	100

Table 8. Content control, total.

	Teacher	*Teacher/Stud*	*Student*	*Total*
	80,81	19,19	0	100

Table 9. Student modality by class.

	List.	*Speak.*	*Read.*	*Writ.*	*List/Spea*	*Other*	*Total*
Class 1	21,61	13,77	7,84	0	48,73	8,05	100
Class 2	22,72	21,16	4,68	24,28	21,60	5,56	100
Class 3	10,48	25,81	0,60	7,06	43,75	12,3	100

Table 10. Student modality, total.

	List.	*Speak.*	*Read.*	*Writ.*	*List/Spea*	*Other*	*Total*
	18,07	20,32	4,30	10,16	38,39	8,76	100

If the topic or task is determined by the students or by the teacher and students together, this contributes to a communicative language learning according to Spada & Fröhlich 1995. The students would be able to take up subjects that interest them, which would make them more motivated to communicate. In all three classes, this turned out to be a rare phenomenon (see tables 7 and 8). The teacher is usually already prepared with topics and tasks when the lesson begins. One problem with letting students have too much to do with the planning of the lesson, however, is that a class usually consists of at least 20 students which makes it hard to find something that everyone wants to do. Still, in some cases, students have been involved in decisions concerning the topic they will discuss. This mostly involves topics within the topic, that is if the teacher is holding a grammar session, students take up problems with specific grammatical structures and by this lead the teaching into a certain direction. This gives students an opportunity to deal with the difficulties they are having and also to communicate in the foreign language.

As tables 9 and 10 show, the combination of listening and speaking seems to be the most common skill practice in the classroom. This indicates that the teaching method is intended to be communicative. It is important, however, to

Table 11. Materials by class, type.

	Minim. text	*Extend. text*	*Audio*	*Visual*	*Aud/Vis*	*Other*	*Total*
Class 1	53,98	32,39	5,11	0	0	8,52	100
Class 2	35,85	18,40	23,58	0	22,17	0	100
Class 3	49,40	32,14	0	18,45	0	0	100

Table 12. Materials, total, type.

	Minim. text	*Extend. text*	*Audio*	*Visual*	*Aud/Vis*	*Other*	*Total*
	45,68	26,98	10,61	5,58	8,45	2,70	100

point out that only a few students are speaking. Since time is very limited in instructed language learning, not everyone has a chance to speak even in the most communicative activities. Even though teachers try to involve all students in the discourse, factors like motivation and personality play an important role in activities where students are encouraged to speak. Usually a few students are very extrovert and take up a lot of the speaking time with the result that the rest of the class do not get to practice their speech in the foreign language. This is a difficult problem to solve, since forcing the students to speak does not favour their interest in the language. Group work, however, might be the solution for at least some students as only a few people are listening and, therefore, the situation is less intimidating.

The total of the three classes shows that spoken discourse is the main feature in the classroom (see table 10). Even though one class is doing quite a lot of writing, this is still a relatively rare element in classroom teaching.

As tables 11 and 12 show, a textbook is the most frequently used material in the classrooms, with both minimal and extended text. A lot of the minimal texts consist of vocabularies in the textbook and/or on handouts. For a communicative purpose, extended texts are important elements in the classroom. Minimal texts are, however, a good complement for the students to understand the parts upon which a text is build on.

Other types of material vary according to the class. Class 2 for example, listens to tapes and watches video a lot more than the others, while the teacher in class 3 seems to prefer visual material where the students get to speak themselves. It also needs to be pointed out that class 3 has a native French teacher which means that the students hear a ‘real’ French accent all the time, while the others need a tape for this.

Most frequently, the material is specifically designed for foreign language teaching (see tables 13 and 14). Considering the fact that the students have not

Table 13. Materials by class, source.

	L2-NNS	*L2-NS*	*L2-NSA*	*Student-made*	*Total*
Class 1	75,14	14,69	10,17	0	100
Class 2	74,53	0,47	18,40	6,60	100
Class 3	100,00	0	0	0	100

Table 14. Materials, total, source.

	L2-NNS	*L2-NS*	*L2-NSA*	*Student-made*	*Total*
	81,37	5,13	10,84	2,66	100

yet reached an advanced level of foreign language learning, native speaker material only could easily make the students lose interest in the language as it might be too hard to understand. One of the teachers, however, also introduces material intended for native speakers such as articles in newspapers. As a complement to foreign language teaching material, this might wake interest by the use of current topics and also contribute to the strengthening of the students' self-esteem once they have got through the text and understood it.

Discussion of part A

The three classes in the study proved to be a mixture of traditional teaching and a more communicative approach. Even though these classes are in different schools and have different conditions (e.g. the students' skills), it seems to be a relatively uniform teaching method.

Fröhlich, Spada & Allen 1985 proposed a global score to indicate the degree of 'communicative orientation' of different L2 programs, where features representing a communicative classroom are assigned a numerical value based on the percentage of class time spent on that feature. The global score is the total of the individual values for each feature. Measuring communicativity, however, is somewhat problematic, especially regarding the communicative features. It is very hard, if not impossible, to say if these features are of equal theoretical importance, that is if they can be counted as equally communicative. As long as this is an unsolved problem, there will be no reliable results with these kinds of measurements. This study has, therefore, focused on describing the communicativity in the classrooms and comparing them with each other.

The two main features in a communicative environment are:

– focus on meaning

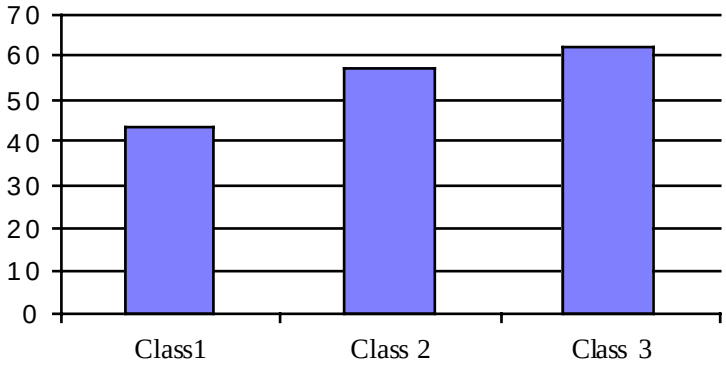

Figure 1. Focus on meaning.

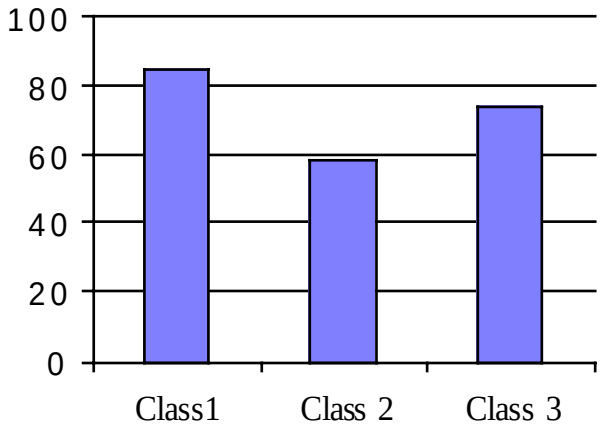

Figure 2. Opportunities to speak.

– opportunity to speak

It is impossible to decide whether one is more ‘typical’ than the other, so combining the two measures is meaningless. Thus, the two features are treated separately and the classes have to be compared according to each feature. Focus on meaning is counted under ‘Content’, and is realised by ‘Other topics’, alone or in combination with ‘Language’. Figure 1 shows the distribution of focus on meaning in the three classes. The columns indicate percentage of total amount of time in the classroom.

Opportunity to speak is another necessary condition for communication to appear. This is found in ‘Participant organisation’ under ‘Group’, in ‘Content control’ under ‘Student’ and in ‘Student modality’ under ‘Speaking’ and ‘Listening/Speaking’. Figure 2 shows amount of time where students have good opportunities to speak.

Table 15. Target language (% of coded utterances).

	Form	*Vocab.*	*FCP*	*FCC*	*Mpers.*	*Macad.*
L1	61,18	8,62	43,91	26,75	23,89	23,95
L1Trans	9,87	4,58	6,44	3,39	8,85	4,88
L2	28,29	86,52	49,16	68,66	61,06	68,37
L1+L2	0,66	0,27	0,48	1,20	6,19	2,79
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The features thus vary in the different classes. In class 1, there are a lot of opportunities to speak, while class 3 involves a lot of focus on meaning. Consequently, the three classes can thus be summarised as having a fairly similar degree of communication and can in the following be considered as a unity representative of traditional and communicative teaching in combination.

Part B

Part B is analysed according to the various categories of activities. As was shown in Part A, the three classes include similar teaching methods with approximately the same amount of communicativity, which is why a division between classes is not relevant here. Tables 15-18 are based on approximately 2000 student utterances.

For a communicative classroom, a necessary condition is of course an extensive use of the foreign language involved. Table 15 shows that this use varies according to focus on form and meaning. Traditional grammar lessons, where focus is exclusively on form, are mostly performed in the students' first language. The students are then usually allowed to answer back in their first language. One reason for this might be the importance of the students' understanding of the structures and rules presented to them. When focus is on form only, examples usually have a limited part of the teaching, whereas in tasks where focus includes both form and meaning, the teaching method is based upon communicative examples in the foreign language. These categories do, therefore, contain a lot more L2 use. There is a significant difference in the use of the foreign language between FCP and FCC, which is also depending on the fact that the former rather concentrates on the form while the latter includes a lot more interaction. Focus on meaning alone also generates quite an extensive use of L2 from the students. The teacher uses the foreign language and expects the students to do the same. It is not uncommon, however, that they answer in their first language if they lack the necessary vocabularies. Insecurity also plays an important role in these situations. A

Table 16. Information gap (% of coded utterances).

	Form	*Vocab.*	*FCP*	*FCC*	*Mpers.*	*Macad.*
Giving info, pred	69,74	38,00	44,39	24,95	18,58	58,14
Giving info, unpred	8,55	5,66	6,92	26,75	41,59	13,72
Req. info, pseudo	0	0	0	3,99	0	0
Req. info, genuine	15,13	4,31	17,90	13,77	7,08	7,21
Other	6,58	52,03	30,79	30,54	32,75	20,93
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

student sometimes needs to be persuaded into giving an answer in the foreign language.

Vocabulary is special in this sense since the students have to repeat the vocabulary in L2. The use of the foreign language here is, however, not relevant for the communication factor, as most of the task is performed with single words.

It has been argued that a high degree of unpredictability makes students more motivated to communicate and is therefore an important factor in communicativity in the classroom (Spada & Fröhlich 1995). Giving predictable information, that is, answering a question to which the teacher already knows the answer, proved to be a common feature especially in tasks where focus is on form (see table 16). Interestingly enough, also tasks where focus is on meaning with an academic topic generate the same kind of predictable information. When the topic is personal, however, students give more unpredictable information. It is the teacher that controls the information given by the students by requesting information in a pseudo or a genuine way, which means that the academic subjects are conducted in a way that makes the students follow the outlined path. Personal subjects include questions like *What did you do during the weekend*, etc. which results in unpredictable answers. Once again, there is a big difference between FCP and FCC and once again the former follows the pattern of focus on form while the latter is more meaning-oriented.

Pseudo questions are obviously very rare, as the data only regards the students' behaviour. Genuine questions, on the other hand, are fairly common when form is involved. In these situations the students need to understand the different forms and structures and do, therefore, ask a lot of questions.

Sustained speech is an important factor in the description of communicative behaviour. Outside the classroom, speakers engage in both extended and minimal speech. Extended discourse, however, has traditionally been restricted by classroom instruction, which makes it hard for the students to take part in a

Table 17. Sustained speech (% of coded utterances in L2).

	Form	*Vocab.*	*FCP*	*FCC*	*Mpers.*	*Macad.*
Minimal	52,27	66,77	34,62	38,75	50,00	54,90
Phrase	45,45	16,46	16,83	17,09	21,05	17,97
Clause	2,27	16,77	48,56	43,87	23,68	27,12
Sustained	0	0	0	0,28	5,26	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 18. Form restriction (% of coded utterances in L2, not oui/non).

	Form	*Vocab.*	*FCP*	*FCC*	*Mpers.*	*Macad.*
Choral	52,50	58,42	11,86	18,21	16,95	1,57
Restricted	47,50	40,59	87,63	67,01	22,03	10,20
Unrestricted	0	0,99	0,52	14,78	61,02	88,23
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

'real' conversation outside the classroom. The present study confirms these traditional views of extended discourse. As is shown in table 17, sustained speech is hardly ever performed by the students, only when the subject is personal a few students expand their utterances. Whole clauses are used primarily in tasks with a combination of focus on form and meaning. Since these usually contain practices where students are encouraged to use whole sentences, this is not very surprising. When focus is on form or meaning alone, there are usually no such practices and it is easier to get away with only a word or a phrase. So even if focus is on meaning and the task involves possibilities for extended speech, students are not obliged to use whole sentences and do, therefore, get less communicative practice than if the teacher directs the students in specific practices.

To experiment with the language and test hypotheses about its structures is a way of practising communication. In traditional classrooms, however, the learner is expected to produce language that is restricted in its forms. This might be intimidating for the students who then communicate less since it is too much hard work to get the utterances correct. Table 18 shows that the more focus is on meaning, the more the students can speak freely without corrective interruptions. Teachers are most restrictive when focus is on form, or both on form and on meaning. As is mentioned above, focus on both form and meaning usually involves practices where the students are encouraged to use whole sentences. These are equally expected to be correct in their forms. When focus is exclusively on meaning, however, the students have their chance to experiment with the language. As was seen in table 17, however,

the students do not take this chance, which lessens the effect of a communicative situation.

Discussion of part B

The use of part B was aimed at describing the communicative features of the students' verbal behaviour. The different activities were categorised according to focus on meaning and form in order to establish what kind of activities that generate most communication on behalf of the students. Not surprisingly, those activities focusing on meaning gave rise to more communication in the form of extensive use of L2, giving unpredictable information, and unrestricted speech. One important indicator of communicative behaviour, however, diverges from this pattern, namely sustained speech. The students use longer utterances if focus is both on meaning and on form than on meaning exclusively. As is mentioned above there is an explanation for this: activities which focus on both form and meaning tend to be very organised, with well-formed sentences for the students to practice on. Thus, they have to use whole sentences when they speak. When focus is only on meaning, the interaction is usually less controlled which makes it easier for the students to get away with a minimum of speech. Even if the teacher encourages longer utterances, the 'authentic speech' situation is somewhat disturbed when the teacher has to ask the students to extend their speech in every utterance, which is why they often settle for short phrases or words. It is, however, regrettable that the students do not profit more from these occasions since there are few opportunities for them to speak freely and practice their foreign language in the classroom. An interaction where focus is on meaning usually invites the students to make use of structures and vocabularies they have learnt and also to convey messages. How to make them do this, however, is a very common problem in most classrooms, and to solve this, factors like attitudes, motivation and personality have to be considered.

Concluding remarks

This study has described the communicativity in three classrooms, and compared students' communicative behaviour in different activities using the COLT observation scheme. No attempts have been made to explain the role of communicativity in language acquisition, though this is the overall purpose with this and following articles that will deal with fluency and accuracy in the foreign language classroom.

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