

Grammar Teaching in Swedish Upper Secondary Schools

What the Syllabus Says and What Teachers Do



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Abstract

This study aims to explore what the syllabi for three English courses in the Swedish upper secondary school suggest about grammar instruction and compares this with active English teachers' interpretations of them. A question that has been researched for this study is if there are any possible connections between what the syllabi may suggest about teaching grammar and how teachers answer that they teach it. The first part of the study is based on the syllabi for English 5, 6 and 7. The second part is made up by results from a questionnaire which 39 English teachers responded to about their views on grammar and the syllabi as well as on their own experiences with teaching grammar. The teachers work in upper secondary schools in the southern part of Sweden and are of different ages and have different amount of experience. A qualitative analysis was carried out of the syllabi with the help from the subject commentaries on the subject of English provided by Skolverket and a web-based questionnaire was sent out active English teachers in Swedish upper secondary schools. The result from the questionnaire was quantitatively analyzed and complemented with commentaries from the respondents. The findings show that not many suggestions are made in the syllabi on how grammar should be taught, with the exception for disfavoured of audiolingual exercise methods, only that it should be taught. Some connections to how the surveyed teachers responded that they work with grammar can be found to how the syllabi talk about teaching in general and grammar instruction.

Keywords: grammar, syllabus, English, Sweden, teachers

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1. Introduction

The role of grammar in the language teaching community has been ever changing. Back in the late 18th century, when English was a new and modern language in Swedish education and language teachers did not have the knowledge or tools to teach a language that was very much living and breathing, they went to Latin for influences on how to teach it. Nowadays, English is highly integrated in the Swedish community and with the expanding globalization in the world, there is a big demand to get learners of English to become proficient and skilled communicators. Along the way of the English language path to fame, the approaches on how to teach and the type of knowledge favoured in language have changed drastically, going from a strictly form-focused teaching and learning to communication and interaction being the core of education.

Following the progress of the Swedish syllabi for English, they have developed in the same manner as language teaching from a grammar-focused syllabus towards a communicative-focused. The grammar-focused teaching dominated for decades before the communicative approach gained popularity (Tornberg, 2009) and when the transition had been made, it quickly developed further away from the earlier grammar-focus. In the latest syllabi, the word “grammar” is not even mentioned, obscuring whether grammar should be taught or not and how.

When discussing with fellow teacher training colleagues, there is a shared view on the syllabi being vague and not giving any concrete examples of how anything should be taught or what varieties should be included in the education. This could result in educational variety which in the long run could lead to inequality in knowledge exposure for students all over Sweden. However, it also gives teachers the freedom to adapt their teaching according to their students' needs. Do teachers do as the syllabi suggest or do they ignore Skolverket's suggestions? What happens if the syllabi do not even provide any suggestions? This is some

of the questions that this study will look into. The first part of the essay will try to answer if the English syllabi suggest anything about grammar instruction and in that case what. The other part will explore English teachers' beliefs and experiences of grammar instruction and their interpretation of the syllabi. A discussion will then be made to compare the results from these two parts of the study to see what possible connections could be found.

2. Literature Review

Following this paragraph, a historical background will be elaborated to provide the study with a solid foundation. This background will bring up different methods that have been popular in language teaching in Sweden through history as well as how these are connected to the "real world" and how that has influenced what methods have appeared at certain periods and dominated during that time. After that, some theories of grammar and methods of grammar teaching will be accounted for as well as some relevant research that has been carried out on similar subjects. No research on this subject has been found in either Swedish or international context but some similar research has been carried out on efficiency of different methods and teachers' beliefs about and use of some methods, as well as the role of grammar in syllabi and language teaching.

2.1. Language Teaching from a Historical Perspective

How language has been taught through history has hovered between communication-focused and structure-focused teaching since the classical era (Tornberg, 2009). Different types of knowledge have been favoured at different times through history which has contributed to a varying choice of teaching methods (Larsson & Westberg, 2011).

Grammar-translation method (GTM) has its roots in the late 18th century. Modern languages like English, German and French that were not considered as highly structured as the antique languages, became more frequent within the frames of language education. To be

able to measure up to Latin and Greek, the modern languages adapted this method that emphasized on grammar and translating literature (Lally, 1998; Tornberg, 2009) In GTM, the native language is used as the language of instruction. When working with language through this method, grammatical rules are explained and described followed by translating texts, mostly isolated sentences, in both the native and the target language (Tornberg, 2009). It was the most commonly used method in language teaching during the 19th century (Larsson & Westberg 2011). Tornberg (2009) explains this by teachers' lack of knowledge to provide the learners of that time with a language education that was true to how language was used in real life. Thus, the living modern languages were treated as the dead classical ones.

Contemporaneously as the modern languages gained popularity and establishment with the regulation of the secondary school in 1858, a movement advocating a reformation of language teaching originated (Tornberg 2009). Advocates of the reformation claimed that grammar took up too much space in the language classroom. They suggested that the foundation of language teaching should be the spoken target language, grammar should be learned inductively, and translation work should be decreased (Cabau-Lampa, 2005). This would become the base of the direct method that later developed. The direct method builds on the assumption that the development of a foreign language is very much alike the development of the mother tongue (Tornberg 2009; Lally 1998).

Despite the reformists' effort to launch the direct method, the GTM continued to influence language teaching greatly into the 20th century (Cabau-Lampa, 2005; Tornberg, 2009). Not until the Second World War did the focus in language teaching move from structure to communication. Audiolingualism was introduced in the USA when people who were sent to the war in Europe needed to learn fast to communicate in a new language (Tornberg, 2009). The method became popular in Sweden and was frequently used during the 1960s and 1970s (Larsson & Westberg, 2011). Similar to the direct method, this method also

focuses on the spoken language. It views language as a form of behaviour that is learned via forming correct habits. Pattern-practice drills are a characteristic element in audiolingual teaching (Thornbury, 1999). Grammatical rules and language overall were learned by mimicking the language and repeating until the language had settled in the learner (Lally 1998; Larsson & Westberg 2011). The students had to make grammatical generalizations themselves from the language that was imitated. Audiolingualists alleged that the new language should be learned so well that the learners would use it subconsciously without any conscious grammar manipulating (Lally 1998).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) had its breakthrough in Sweden in the 1980s' curriculum for the elementary school (Lundahl, 2012). When the number of ESL learners increased rapidly in the 1970s, a great need for a new approach suddenly arose. Some learners had already knowledge about grammatical rules but had trouble using them communicatively in the target language. (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002, Lundahl 2012). The skills and abilities one needs to use a language, are believed to be acquired via interaction and communication in the target language (Hinkel & Fotos 2002, Hiep 2007). When CLT started, activities such as role play and communicative games were included in the method. Nowadays it is mainly associated with discussion, reading, and writing which are all seen as communicative actions that are intertwined (Lundahl, 2012).

Explicit grammar instruction is not necessarily included in this teaching approach. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (as cited in Liao, 2000) believe that grammar is best learned by trying to communicate in the target language. However, both Thompson and Littlewood (as cited in Liao, 2000) point out that grammar could be included in a communicative teaching approach in that one uses some traditional methods when teaching it. This could be done by discussing a grammatical construction and then let the learners practice it communicatively or

one could address a grammatical problem or construction after a communicative activity (Liao 2000).

2.2. Theorizing Grammar Acquisition and Grammar Learning

Chomsky presented his theory of universal grammar in 1959 (cited in Tornberg, 2009) which turned the world of language teaching upside down. Behaviourists believed that language was acquired with help of drills and imitation of correct language. Chomsky pointed out that children could acquire their first language perfectly even though they were exposed to imperfect language, such as incomplete sentences and mixed language constructions. He separated the native speaker's competence and performance, where the competence stands for the speaker's ability to decide which phrases are grammatically correct and which are not, and the performance stands for the actual language use. He meant that since children can perfect their language competence despite exposition to faltering language performance of people in their surroundings, people are born with an ability to learn language. He called this a universal grammar (Tornberg, 2009; Hinkel & Fotos, 2002; Lally, 1998; Lundahl, 2012).

In 1981, Krashen published his Monitor Model, a language learning theory that became the root to many discussions and an influence on language instruction the following years. This theoretical model consists of five hypotheses: (a) competence in language can be reached by acquisition, a subconscious process fuelled by communication, or by learning, a conscious process undergoing education, (b) grammatical structures are learned in a specific order which does not vary regardless of when the language is learned, (c) language acquired by learning can only be used when there is enough time and focus on the form, (d) acquisition is made when the learner is exposed to the target language on a level that is slightly above the learner's current language level, (e) how well the language is acquired depends on the student's attitude and their "filter". If the filter is low, the learner is receptive, but if the filter is high, the acquisition is restrained by the learner's lack of confidence or motivation.

(Tornberg 2009, Lally 1998).

Long (1991) presented a new type of grammar instruction called “focus on form”, where a communicative approach was combined with formal instruction. He meant that teaching should not be conducted with a focus on formS, which is when one is explicitly focusing on form and linguistic features, but with a focus on form, i.e. to bring up grammatical features when students make errors or ask about them (Long, 1991). This kind of instruction is grounded on “the distinction between explicit instruction on grammar forms (with an s) and meaning-focused use of form (no s) in such a way that the learner must notice, then process the target grammar structure in purely communicative input (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002, pp.5).

2.3. Previous Research

Which role grammar should play in language teaching and how and what kind of grammar should be taught are subjects that have been under examination before. Hos and Kekec (2015) examined thoughts of both teachers and students on the role of grammar in language teaching at a university preparatory school in Turkey. This study reveals that both learners and instructors consider grammar to be an essential part of language teaching, but they have different opinions on how grammar should be instructed. The examined teachers prefer a contextual approach when teaching grammar whilst the students lean more towards a deductive way of grammar instruction. Students also request that the instruction would be mainly in the target language whereas the teachers are of a different opinion (Hos & Kekec, 2015).

To integrate grammar into a communicative syllabus could be problematic, but Rogers (1996) thinks that it would solve existing problems with trying to impose traditional ideas of grammar on a modern communicative approach. When Rogers (1996) compares historical views of grammar with the modern communicative approach, some

recommendations for makers of syllabi were drawn from the result of this analysis. She means that the integration of grammar instruction into a communicative syllabus needs to be addressed because when grammar is omitted, traditional notions of grammar and learning fill up the gaps. Addressing grammar in this way, however, does not mean to retrogressively go back to formal and decontextualized learning and syllabi. However, since the communicative approach lacks ways to determine ease or difficulty of learning, she thinks that psycholinguistics could be of assistance to find evidence on how languages are learned (Rogers, 1996). Rogers (1996) continues with saying that language teaching not always can stay true to how languages are used in “real life”.

What type of instruction is most effective then? Arends, Carinus, and Tammenga-Helmantel (2014) have four hypotheses about this that suggest that different methods suit different languages better. They say that explicit instruction works best with English and German whereas Spanish works best with a non-explicit instruction type. Also, one hypothesis says that an inductive or deductive approach works equally well when teaching English and German. 981 students at 42 lower secondary schools who are all sharing the same mother tongue and studying either English, German, or Spanish, are taught in five different ways. Four groups are exposed to one of the four kinds of instruction mentioned earlier, and one group is not exposed to any grammar instruction at all. Potential progress is tracked with the help of a pre- and post-test. The group who does not get any grammar instruction at all does not get as good results as the other groups, showing that some kind of grammar instruction works more effectively than excluding it from the teaching (Arends, Carinus & Tammenga-Helmantel, 2014).

The effectiveness of implicit and explicit grammar instruction have been under investigation before. In 2013, Nazari examines how these types of instruction affect the achievements in receptive and productive modes for 60 female ESL-learners of English. They

are taught for ten sessions in two separate groups where one group is taught explicitly and receives a direct form of feedback and the other group is taught implicitly and gets feedback on how many errors they make but not which type of errors. At the final test, the group with the explicit grammar teaching does much better than the group who is taught implicitly (Nazari, 2013).

Different methods of teaching grammar are contrasted in 2011 by Chang who compares GTM with the Communicative Approach (CA) with the help of two college classes at a Taiwanese university. The classes are taught with either one of the methods over a semester where they have four grammar lessons per week. At the end of the semester, it is the GTM-class that has made the biggest improvement. The students in this group also answer more positively on a questionnaire about how the method they had been exposed to had influenced their learner motivation and confidence (Chang, 2011).

Borg and Phipps (2009) bring up an important issue in their paper “Exploring Tensions Between Teachers’ Grammar Teaching Beliefs and Practices”. They follow three EFL teachers working in an English-medium Turkish university and interrogate them about their beliefs about grammar teaching. The answers are later compared to what had been observed at classrooms observations. There is often a liaison between the beliefs and the practices which tend to be a “focus-on-form” approach. When there is no liaison, it is because the teachers use a method they do not believe in but still use because the students expect it or it is required by the curriculum (Borg & Phipps, 2009).

2.4 Aim and Research Questions

What previous research may tell is that grammar should be included in a communicative syllabus and that it should be instructed in some way in order to develop in this area. Some studies show that students tend to prefer and benefit more from a deductive or explicit grammar instruction whereas teachers lean more towards teaching inductively or

implicitly. One study tells us that teachers most often teach the way that they think they teach, except when they use a method they do not believe in.

The aim of this study is to explore grammatical implications in the syllabi for English in the Swedish upper secondary school and compare them with how active teachers respond that they teach and think about grammar. For the first part of this study, I have used the Swedish national syllabi for the courses English 5, 6, and 7 (Skolverket, 2011). These were qualitatively analysed to find out if they suggest anything about grammar instruction in the English classroom. For the second part of this study, I had created a web-survey with the help of Dörnyei's *Questionnaires in Second Language Research* (2003). The survey was aiming at English teachers and their experience of grammar and the results from it was compared to the analysis of the syllabi. The questions that this study will be trying to answer are the following:

1. What, if anything, do the syllabi for English 5, 6, and 7, suggest about grammar instruction in English at Swedish upper secondary schools?
2. What beliefs and experience do active English teachers in upper secondary schools have with grammar instruction and how do they interpret the syllabi for the English courses in the upper secondary school in relation to grammar instruction?
3. What potential connections are there between what the syllabi suggest about grammar instruction and how the examined teachers work with grammar in their classrooms?

3. Method

3.1 Material

The Swedish school system went through a reformation in 2011 which included new syllabi. The aim with reforming the school system was, according to Skolverket (2011b), to ensure that the students graduating from upper secondary school would be prepared for future

studies and professions; that more students would graduate; to create a more equal education through the country; and to create clear steering documents so that teachers, parents, and students know what are expected of the courses (Skolverket, 2011b) The syllabi for English 5, 6, and 7, were published in 2011. Every syllabus is divided up into one part for the core content and one part for the knowledge requirement. The core content is divided up into subcategories that concern the content of communication, reception, and production and interaction. The knowledge requirements are specified for the grades A, C, and E. All syllabi share a common aim and a few skills and abilities that all students who are studying English should be able to develop (Skolverket, 2011a).

The web-survey consisted of three sections where the first one dealt with interpretations of the syllabi, the second with personal beliefs about grammar instruction, and the last one with experience of teaching grammar. Every section of the survey was concluded with an open-ended question where the respondents had the possibility to elaborate on any question in that section or express opinions on that section's subject that they thought were not brought up. An introductory page was included with a description of the survey as well as questions about the respondents. The survey ended with a page where the respondents might provide further comments on the overall topic of the survey and leave their e-mail if they were interested in reading the final essay.

In total, the survey was made up of 13 questions, where two questions were targeted to the collection of information about the participants. The questions were either closed-ended or open-ended and not all questions were mandatory to answer. The survey also included 17 statements, which the participants had to rate on a six-degree Likert scale depending on if they agreed with the statement or not. When using the Likert scale, it is important to make the items positive or negative and not neutral since one wants to "...evoke salient evaluative reactions..." (Dörnyei, 2003, pp. 37). The six-degree scale was chosen as an effort to obstruct

respondents rating undecidedly, i.e. in the middle of the scale, to a statement, due to rushing through the survey and not really thinking about the answers. The six-point scale is also the one preferred by Dörnyei (2003). If the respondent rated 1 on a statement it meant that s/he strongly agreed with the statement whereas s/he strongly disagreed with the statement to which s/he rated a 6. The creation of questions and statements was made with consideration to the methods and theories brought up in the literature review and background, such as communicative language teaching, grammar-translation method, and the direct method.

As Dörnyei (2003) writes one may yield three different kinds of data from a questionnaire: factual, which is answering who the participants are, behavioural, that answers what the persons responding have done or are doing in the examined area, and attitudinal, answering what the respondents think. This type of data would be helpful in answering the questions asked in this study. The questionnaire, along with all the answers, can be found in full in Appendix 2.

3.2. Participants

The participants were all active English at upper secondary schools in Scania, Blekinge, Halland or the southern part of Småland. They have different amount of teaching experience, varying from 0-5 years to up to more than 25 years, differing in age from the youngest being 27 to the oldest being 65. At the outset, the examined population were supposed to be composed of teachers working in Scania, but since the e-mail request that went out to teachers in Scania only resulted in 17 responses, and Dörnyei (2003) proposes that a sample should be made up by at least 30 responses, teachers in surrounding counties were contacted as well.

3.3. Process

A qualitative analysis was carried out on the syllabi. The category in which the syllabi was coded was “explicit grammar instruction”. Words such as *grammar*, *correctness*,

accuracy, form, structure, and rule, were included in this category. The result from this deductive approach to analysing the syllabi was contrasted with the result from an inductive analysis of the same material. Larger chunks of text that could represent the same thing, i.e. explicit grammar instruction, were searched for. This analysis could, therefore, be compared to a summative content analysis since the first step was to count certain words and the following step was to search for hidden meanings that appeal to the theme (Zang & Wildemuth, 2009) Since the aim was to form an understanding of how Skolverket wants teachers in Swedish upper secondary schools to teach grammar, the subject commentaries provided by Skolverket (2011c) on their website were used as a tool to help analyse the syllabi. The commentaries were used to make clarifications and define notions that are brought up in the syllabi.

The questionnaire was created based on guidelines from Dörnyei's (2003) manual on question design and procedures when researching second language acquisition and learning. When the survey had been created, it was shared with fellow teacher training students who gave comments on unclarities and advice on improvement. Some changes in phrasing and disposition were made in regards to this. Dörnyei (2003) mentions that piloting is an important step in the process of constructing a reliable questionnaire.

To get in contact with potential participants, e-mail addresses were looked for at websites of upper secondary schools in the chosen counties. Only those who were explicitly listed as English teachers at the schools' websites were contacted. The questionnaire was then sent out to a total of 152 English teachers in two separate rounds via e-mail (see Appendix 1). The e-mail was written in Swedish and translated into English. 39 out of the 152 contacted teachers respond, i.e. about 25% respond. Unfortunately, an explicit consent form was not included in either the e-mail or the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire was not

mandatory to answer, which is made clear in the e-mail. Also, all of the respondents had access to my e-mail address if they had any questions.

4. Results

4.1. The Syllabi for English in the Upper Secondary School

In the common aim for all three English courses, not many words alluding to explicit grammar instruction are to be found (see Table 1). The words chosen for the coding are not frequently occurring in the syllabi, with the exception of the word “structure” which could be found 17 times (see Table 1), mostly in the knowledge requirements. Even though the first coding of the syllabi does not provide the analysis with much material, other phrases and sentences are found that contribute to creating a view on Skolverket’s suggestions on grammar instruction.

Table 1. Coding Results

| Coding Results: “Explicit Grammar Instruction” | | | | | | |
|---|---------|------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------|
| Word | Grammar | Form | Structure | Correctness | Accuracy | Rules |
| Times it occurs | 0 | 2 | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

In the very first sentence of the description of the English subject (Skolverket, 2011a), it mentions that “teaching of English should aim at helping students to develop knowledge about language...” (Skolverket, 2011). What knowledge the students are supposed to develop about language is not specified, only that it should be developed “...so that they have the ability, desire and confidence to use English in different situations and for different purposes” (Skolverket, 2011a). To be aware of grammatical structures and have knowledge about grammatical rules could be a part of the knowledge that boosts the confidence of speaking English that Skolverket wants students to achieve, but not necessarily. Later in the

same paragraph, it is stated that students should "...be given the opportunity to develop correctness in their use of language in speech and writing..." (Skolverket, 2011a).

Correctness could mean for example knowing which type of language is most appropriate for a certain kind of situation, using vocabulary properly, and conjugating and placing words correctly. Since correctness may be different in different dialects of English, and no dialect is specified in the syllabi, it is even harder to interpret what is meant by developing "correctness".

English is described to aim at giving students the "...opportunity, through the use of language in functional and meaningful contexts, to develop all-round communicative skills." (Skolverket, 2011a). The skills that are included are reception, production and interaction, and adapting language after different situations and recipients (Skolverket, 2011a). In the subject commentaries, Skolverket refers to GERS and its description of communicative language competence (Skolverket, 2011c). GERS stand for Gemensam Europeisk Referensram för Språk (translation: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). They specify communicative competence as being competent linguistically, socio-linguistically, and pragmatically. The linguistic competence is what is interesting for this study. This competence is further operationalized into six subcategories, which are lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonologic, orthographic, and ortoepic competence. Three of these competences include being able to use and have knowledge about different grammatical features (Skolverket, 2007).

In lexical competence, being able to use grammatical units of the closed parts of speech is included and in semantic competence, the learners are supposed to be able to know the meaning of grammatical units, categories, structures, and processes. The grammatical competence is suggested to be defined as having the knowledge and ability to use a language's grammatical resources and to understand and express meaning by producing and

recognizing well-formulated phrases and sentences. It makes clear that memorizing and repeating drilled phrases are not included in this competence (Skolverket, 2007). Learners should be competent both in morphology, that is being able to construct words and have knowledge about grammar within words, and in syntax, to know what rules apply to different word combinations and grammatical structures within clauses and sentences (Skolverket, 2007). Assuming that it is this definition of communicative competence that Skolverket (2011a) means in the syllabi since it is the one that is referred to in the subject commentaries, grammar is very much present in Skolverket's guidelines.

In addition to what has been mentioned, linguistic security is also embedded in the all-around communicative competence that is brought up in the syllabi. With being linguistically secure, Skolverket means that the student should be able to, to the extent that it is possible, master grammar, among other things (Skolverket, 2011c). Besides from developing linguistic security, it is declared in the aim that students should acquire language awareness and learn about how languages are learned (Skolverket, 2011a). According to Skolverket (2011c), to have language awareness means having the ability to consciously reflect on what a language is and how it is used in varying ways, and to be aware of how there are different ways of learning a language and developing one's language ability (Skolverket, 2011c).

Under the rubric of "core content", in the subcategory for "content of communication", one may read "content and form in different kinds of fiction" for English 5 and "themes, ideas, form, content in film and literature" for English 6 (Skolverket, 2011a). The content of communication represents what the subject should cover in reception, production, and interaction (Skolverket, 2011c). Form in the contexts mentioned above could relate to that structures and what the language express, should be discussed in different kinds

of fiction, just as much as the content. In these cases, form could also mean that the form of fiction should be under discussion, i.e. if it is, for example, a short story, novella, or a tragedy.

Moving on to reception, the first point in the syllabus for English 5 reads out to “Spoken language, also with different social and dialect features, and texts that instruct, relate, summarise, explain, discuss, report and argue, also via film and other media.”. A similar point can be found in the syllabi for English 6 and English 7 (Skolverket, 2011a). Dialects differ in several ways such as pronunciation and vocabulary, but also in grammar (Roach, 2009). Thereby, one may argue that grammar is embedded in this point since grammar is one of many dialectal features.

The receptional core content of English 5 includes “How words and phrases in oral and written communications create structure and context by clarifying introduction, causal connection, time aspects, and conclusions.”. This part consists of words that are associated with functions that grammar has. Skolverket (2011c) comments that education in the English subject should highlight why and how words and phrases are used in order to learn their lexical meaning, like spelling and pronunciation, but also how they may be used to create structure and context. By receiving and reflecting on language form, the students’ linguistic repertoire and consciousness develop (Skolverket, 2011c). A bit further into the syllabus for English 5, under production and interaction, a similar point is found that could be about the same thing as the one mentioned above: “Processing of their own and others’ oral and written communications in order to vary, clarify and specify, as well as to create structure and adapt these to their purpose and situation. This covers the use of words and phrases that clarify causal connections and time aspects.” (Skolverket, 2011a).

In English 6 and 7, the knowledge requirements increase and are built upon. In production and interaction, the “Processing of language and structure in their own and others’ oral and written communications, and also in formal contexts” should be covered (Skolverket,

2011a). This point can be found in the syllabus for English 6 and there is a similar one in English 7 which also includes “complex contexts”. They build upon a point from the syllabus for English 5 that was mentioned earlier. The difference between the two is that this includes formal contexts, and also complex contexts in the case of English 7. When Skolverket (2011c) comments on this in the subject commentaries, they mention that the demands are higher on the content as well as the form and that these demands concern issues such as politeness, structure and linguistic correctness just to mention a few (Skolverket, 2011c). These things are all depending on that the students have sufficient grammatical knowledge about modality and other grammatical features.

To teach students about grammatical features such as modality could also be important if the students should be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge about “How structure and context are built up and how attitudes, perspectives, and style are expressed in spoken and written language in various genres.” which is mentioned a bit further into the syllabus for English 6 (Skolverket, 2011a). There is also a point in English 7 that one could argue touch upon modality: “Strategies for drawing conclusions about the spoken language and texts in terms of attitudes, perspectives, purposes and values, and to understand implied meaning.” (Skolverket, 2011a) Skolverket (2011c) believes that for students to be able to do this, they need to develop a critical linguistic consciousness. As previously discussed, Skolverket (2011c) talks about being linguistically conscious as, among other things, being able to comprehend and reflect on language form in terms of lexical meaning but also on how they create structure and form (Skolverket, 2011c).

A point in the core content for English 7 that begins with “How oral and written communications in different genres are built up...” is also expressed through a knowledge requirement that state that the students for the grade of E should understand “...English in various genres of an advanced nature” (Skolverket, 2011a). Skolverket (2011c) identifies this

type of texts as being linguistically correct and have a clear structure (Skolverket, 2011c), which are depending on fundamental knowledge in grammar. Students are also supposed to adapt their production of language to different genres (2011a).

Some frequently occurring words in the syllabi are the words “varied”, “clearly”, and “coherently”, which is used in combination with different words to express how well the students should be able to perform for a certain grade. To do something “relatively varied” means that the pupil with its limited repertoire of words and clause structures can express something in different ways (Skolverket, 2011c). When the syllabi say that students should express themselves “clearly”, this means that they should know how to use regular grammatical structures and express themselves correctly. Being coherent has mostly to do with connecting text and phrases with each other. Students should have the ability to arrange clauses to coherent units of speech and written text with help from e.g. conjunctions. This goes hand in hand with fluency that is also required of the students. They should be somehow fluent, i.e. produce structure and understand how sentence structure and vocabulary choice works to unify a text (Skolverket, 2011c).

4.2. Teachers and the Syllabi

The first section of the questionnaire concerns how the questioned teachers interpret the syllabi in terms of grammar instruction. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (87.2% = 34 of 39), does not think that the syllabi for English suggest anything about grammar instruction. Most of the teachers who think that the syllabi actually suggest something about this think that grammar is included in learners’ development of producing written and spoken language. One of the respondent answers the following on the follow-up question “if yes, what do you think it suggests?” (Question B2): “That grammar and structures are part of communicative competence” (Question B2, Respondent X). Another respondent says this to the same question: “It suggests that I as a teacher provide the students with the tools necessary

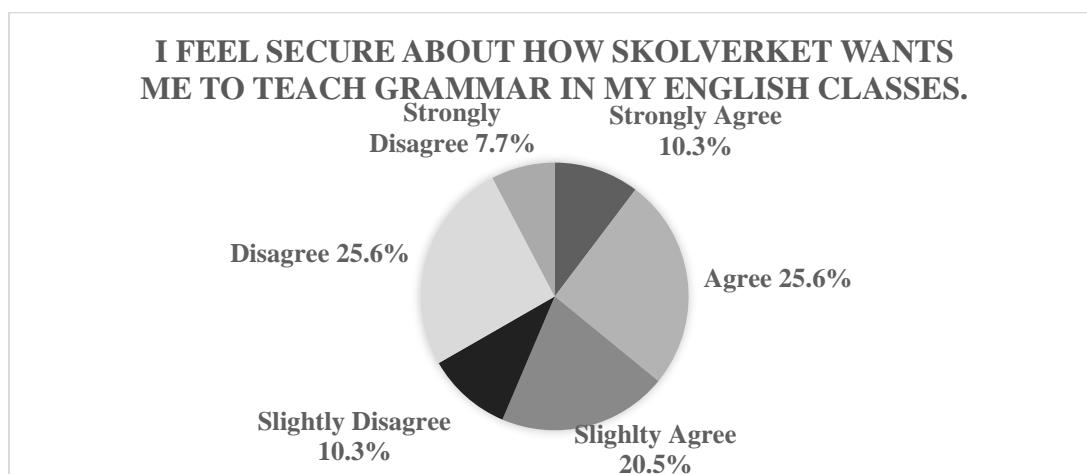
to be able to develop their ability to express themselves in writing and through speech and this includes grammar.” (Question B2, Respondent AK)

Respondent K mentions that s/he thinks that the syllabus for English is influenced by Krashen’s works which this teacher likes, while respondent P motivates that there is an underlying message that grammar is important by mentioning that it is included in some comments on assessments, even though there are no clear instructions on how to teach it.

In question C, asking if the respondent would say that s/he teaches grammar in the way that the syllabus suggests, not as many teachers answers that they do not think that the syllabus suggests anything. In the previous question, 34 teachers answered that they do not think that the syllabus suggests anything about grammar instruction, whereas in this question, only 26 give the same answer. Nine respondents give an affirmative answer to if they would say that they teach grammar in accordance with the syllabus suggestions.

Even though most respondents do not think that the syllabi make any specific suggestions on how grammar should be taught, it is a somewhat even distribution of positive and negative rankings to if they feel secure about how Skolverket wants them to teach grammar. The mean score on this item is 3.24. That the mean score leans towards the middle shows that the number of respondents that answer that they agree with that they feel secure and the number of those who disagree are almost the same (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Question A



When asked whether they want Skolverket to make more suggestions on the instruction of grammar or not, almost half of the respondents (48.7%) call for more clarity. Fifteen teachers (38.5%) do not request clearer guidelines on grammar instruction from Skolverket. Two teachers elaborate on this by stating that they like that Skolverket do not say too much about this: “I would be sad if Skolverket went in the direction to pinpoint my way of teaching” (Respondent AC, Question E) and “I like that it is up to me as a teacher to construct and plan how I teach grammar in my different courses.” (Respondent Y, Question E) Respondent AC, however, continues to say that “...to specify that grammar SHOULD be taught might be an alternative.”. Respondent AM thinks that it is remarkable that grammar is not mentioned at all.

4.3. Teacher Beliefs

The first statement that the respondents are to rate in this section is “I believe that grammar instruction is an important part of language”. This statement results in a mean score of 2.24 and 35 of the 39 responding teachers rank this statement as 3 or higher, which means that almost all teachers think that grammar instruction is really or somewhat important when teaching language. When asked to rank if they agree or disagree with the statement that no

grammar instruction of any kind is needed in the language teaching classroom, the answers correspond to Question M about whether they think grammar instruction is important or not. 36 out of 39 (92.3%) rate 4 or below, 23 out of these 36 rate a 6, showing that there is a strong majority that does not agree with the statement that grammar instruction is not needed.

The teachers in this study seem to prefer an implicit approach over an explicit one for teaching grammar. The result for the statement that grammar is best taught explicitly, as an independent feature (Question G, see Figure 2), corresponds well to the statement that says that grammar is best taught implicitly, included with other features (Question H, see Figure 3). The mean score for the statement that explicit instruction is best is 4.4 and the answers on the statement that suggested the opposite resulted in a mean at 1.7. The individual answers on these statements also correspond well with each other. Those who gave a positive ranking on the first statement have mostly given a negative ranking on the second one, although some exceptions can be found.

Figure 2. Question G

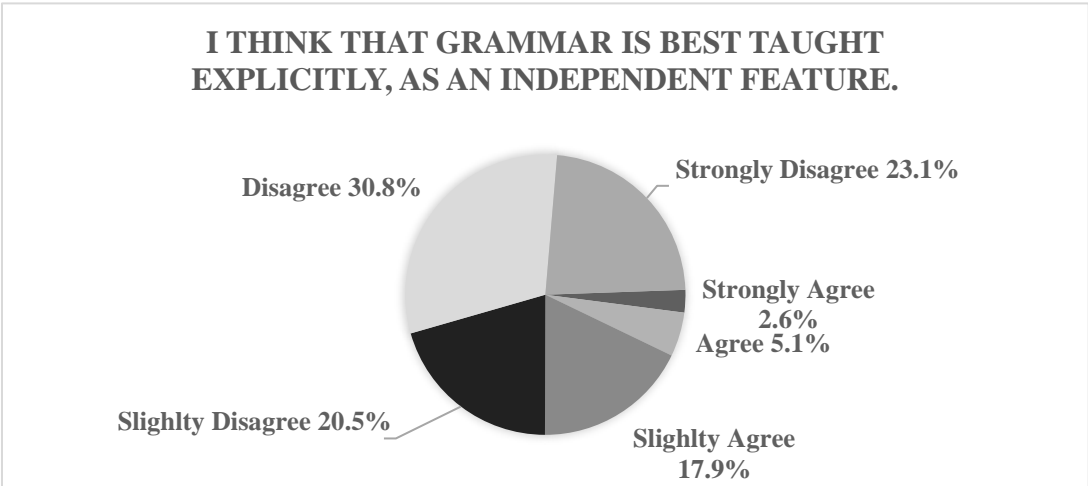
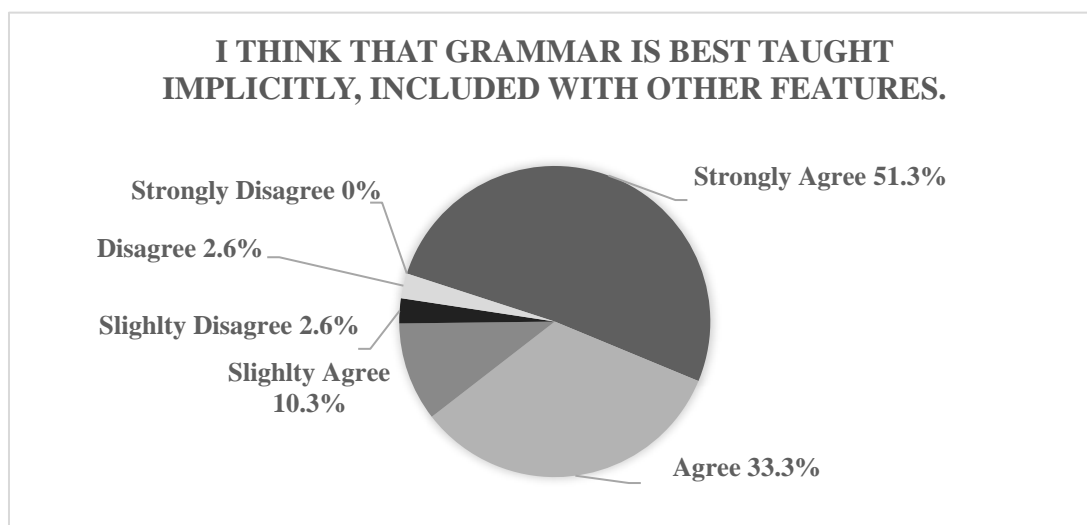


Figure 3. Question H



As can be seen, over half of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that says that grammar is best taught implicitly and a third of them responds that they agreed. For the statement that says that explicit grammar teaching is the best choice, about 75% answer negatively. However, when the population is asked if they believe that a second or foreign language can be learned without explicit grammar teaching, there is a more even distribution of answers. The mean score lands on 3.2 on this statement, which shows that slightly more respondents agree with this than disagree. 24 teachers answer that they agree to some extent while 16 answered that they do not agree on some level.

A few teachers point out in the open commentary of the section that the need of explicit grammar instruction depends very much on the student and factors such as age and previous knowledge. Respondent L writes this on Question O:

“I believe that explicit grammar instruction could be beneficial in lower grades (secondary school) but not necessarily in upper secondary school. One needs explanations for certain things when one is a new learner of a language. I don’t think that it is as important on higher levels. The language grows with an expanding vocabulary when reading lots of literature and factual texts. As part of the reading, one gets expressions and grammatical

finesse. Through listening and producing English, one learns as well.” (my translation)

Connecting to communication, the teachers are supposed to rank a statement that says that explicit grammar instruction disturbs the production of language and thereby hurts communication and another statement that says that grammar could be learned simply by using the target language for communication. More respondents answer negatively towards these statements, which results in a mean score at 3.5 for the statement that grammar could be learned simply through communication and 4.4 on that explicit grammar teaching disturbs the production of language.

The surveyed teachers show that they somewhat agree on that they believe that a language can be learned more easily and accurately with the help of regular exposure to explicit grammar instruction. The mean score for Question J about developing accuracy with explicit grammar instruction is 2.9 and that it should make the learning easier (Question K) resulted in a mean of 3.1.

4.4. Teacher Experience

The examined teachers tend to use English slightly more when working with grammar, the mean score being 3.0, than Swedish, which resulted in a mean score of 3.4. A respondent evaluates on his/her conscious choice of medium of instruction: “I usually use Swedish for grammar in En5, and English in En6 &7.” (Respondent AH, Question Y) Why the teacher chooses different mediums of instruction for different courses s/he does not elaborate on.

The focus of the teachers when teaching grammar seems to be both on form and on meaning, although leaning towards a bigger focus on meaning than form. The mean score on form is 3.4 whilst the statement about meaning gets a mean of 2.8. For these statements, some examples of exercises and ways of working with grammar with a focus on form and a focus on meaning are given. The form-focused examples are drilling of grammatical rules, display

questions, gap-tests on grammar, and direct error feedback (Question R). For meaning-focused grammar teaching, the use of authentic language for showing but not talking about grammar, referential questions and two-way tasks are suggested as examples (Question S). The examples listed for meaning-focused grammar instruction seem to apply slightly more to these teachers than the form-focused ones. These teachers also seem to address grammatical structures and rules preceding students working with them (mean score of 3.2 on Question T) as much as they let their students find them on their own while they are working with them (mean score of 3.6 on Question U).

Out of all the respondents, 53.8% respond that they do not usually use a specific method when they teach grammar. Seven respondents evaluate on their method choice in the open-ended follow-up question (Question W2). Most of them, three out of seven, answer that they use some kind of communicative approach (Respondents D, AD AI), and one of them also uses the GTM (Respondent AD). The others respondents make use of the direct method (Respondent A) and all the methods that were exemplified in the question, i.e. GTM, direct method, audiolingualism, communicative approach (Respondent V). One teacher uses a specific method that includes a specific textbook:

“They work with a grammar textbook called Cambridge Grammar in Use. Each student completes a diagnostic test and from their builds an individual course in which they independently work with in class. They have the rules and answer key and I am there in the classroom if they need any extra help. This way each student has an individual tailor made grammar course.” (Respondent V, Question W2)

The teacher respondents use many kinds of material when teaching grammar in their classes. The most popular aids are textbooks and online material on grammar, 34 answering that they have used the former and 30 the latter. 30 teachers also answered that they have taught grammar on its own, without any aids. These three were closely followed by literature with 27

votes, the internet with 23, games with 21, and newspapers with 20 votes. For the result of the other aids, see Question X in Appendix 2.

Two teachers (Respondents E & F) answer that they use their students' own texts as material when working with grammar. They start out from a student's text and look for what errors the individual student tends to make or look for common errors in the class. One teacher described it like this: "I mainly teach grammar in connection to texts students have written. I collect the most common mistakes and create lessons around those." (Respondent Z, Question Z).

5. Discussion

What may become clear from this analysis of the syllabi is that by a quick read they do not seem to say much about grammar. As previously stated, the word grammar is not even mentioned in any of the syllabi. Not many words associated with grammar in general are to be found (see Table 1). If one, however, goes in depth into some expressions and phrases, one gets the impression that grammar, actually, is highly present in the syllabi. No concrete suggestions on how the grammatical knowledge should be taught could be found, only that the students should learn grammar and learn about grammar as a part of accessing all-around communicative skills (Skolverket, 2007)

The grammatical competence that is part of the communicative competence does not, per the definition provided by GERS (Skolverket, 2007), include memorization and repetition of drilled phrases. This excludes the audiolingual method of language teaching since it relies heavily upon drilling and repeating in order to form correct language habits (Lally, 1998; Larsson & Westberg, 2011).

Overall, there is a focus on not only learning to use grammar but also understanding it and discussing it. The students should get the opportunity to develop their linguistic repertoire and consciousness when receiving and reflecting on language form. The methods

presented in this paper all differ in how much space is allotted to discussion and reflection about form and not only practice of it. In the CLT method, time could be devoted to discussing grammatical constructions according to Liao (2000).

Ellis (2002) proposes that grammar should be taught as awareness to help learners develop explicit knowledge. Grammar could, therefore, be included in having language awareness, which Skolverket wants students to acquire, not only because of what Ellis (2002) says but also since certain learning methods focus a lot on grammar, e.g. the GTM (Lally, 1996; Tornberg, 2012). Since grammar is pretty much inevitable when talking about language, due to its dominating role in the history of language teaching (Cabau-Lampa, 2005; Larsson & Westberg 2011; Tornberg, 2012), it would most certainly be discussed in this context.

The respondents are of different opinions when it comes to interpreting the syllabi. A few of them think that they have an underlying message that grammar should be included, someone thought that it showed influences from a certain linguist, but most of the teachers do not think that the syllabi suggest anything in particular about grammar instruction. A majority of the teachers calls for more clarity from Skolverket on this matter, but still, a little more than half of them feel secure about how they think that Skolverket wants them to teach grammar.

Most of the teachers seem to believe that grammar instruction is an important part of language teaching and that some type of this should be included in the education. This agrees with the study made by Hos and Kekec in 2015. The examined teachers in their study also thought that grammar was important for the teaching of language (Hos & Kekec, 2015). Arends, Carinus and Tammenga-Helmantel (2014) came to the conclusion that students who are exposed to some kind of grammar instruction, regardless if it is explicit or implicit, make greater improvements than those who are not.

The teachers in this study tend to favour implicit instruction over explicit even though many of them seem to think that explicit instruction could be useful and help achieve knowledge that could not be achieved without it. This contradicts what Rogers (1996) believes, i.e. that when grammar instruction is omitted traditional notions of grammar fill up the gaps (Rogers, 1996). These teachers do not teach grammar traditionally as much as they teach it in agreement with more modern method of CLT (Liao, 2000)

There was a slight agreement that explicit grammar instruction simplifies the learning process and improves the accuracy. Both Chang (2011) and Nazari (2013) present studies which show that the groups exposed to explicit grammar instruction in some way made more improvement and were more satisfied with the method than those who were exposed to implicit instruction. To know if the same applies to Swedish learners, more research is needed.

The syllabi do not seem to make any explicit suggestions about how grammar should be instructed, but only that having grammatical knowledge and being linguistically secure, aware and confident, includes mastering grammatical structures. In total, the syllabi tend to focus on communication, and that grammar is included in being able to produce and adapt output in the target language. Thus, one could argue that Skolverket would suggest that the instruction of grammar should be integrated in the teaching of the four skills which are reading, writing, talking and listening, i.e. teaching it implicitly rather than explicitly. That no explicit suggestions are made about this matter could contribute to why the teachers prefer an implicit approach or lean more towards using this.

Some of the respondents answer that the type of instruction they choose vary depending on the students and students' needs for different kinds of instruction. Respondent L's comment on Question O, which says that s/he thinks that younger learners benefit more from explicit grammar instruction, contradicts what Ellis (2002) argues about early stage

learners of language. He argues that grammar is acquired naturally up to a certain point when learners hear and use the target language and that the early stages of acquiring a new language are agrammatical in the sense that the learners begin by learning single words and phrases which they string together to communicate (Ellis, 2002).

Traditional teaching aids, such as textbooks and material specified on the feature that is going to be taught, top the list of the aids these teachers have been using when teaching grammar. The questioned teachers use both English and Swedish when teaching grammar, but English is used more frequently than Swedish. Since the syllabi state that English should be used to as great extent as possible (Skolverket, 2011a) and these teachers tend to use English more frequently than Swedish, they seem to follow the guidelines provided by Skolverket (2011c) on this point. Hos and Kekec (2015) showed on diversity in opinions on which language should be the medium of instruction when teaching grammar in their examined population. While the teachers thought that the native language was the most appropriate one, the students wanted to be taught in the target language. In the case of this study, the teachers use the target language more. What language Swedish learners in upper secondary schools prefer cannot be answered by this study but would need more research.

They perform both form-focused and meaning-focused teaching and they also address grammatical rules both before and after they let their students work with them. Skolverket (2011c) wants students to be able to understand words' and phrases' lexical and grammatical meaning as well as being able to use them to express meaning and reflect on how they could be used to create different kinds of production. To vary the teaching and focus both on form and meaning, as this population does, could arguably be a good way to teach this type of knowledge. This way of working could be compared with Long's (1991) focus on form where most focus is on communication but complemented with explicit grammar when needed (Long, 1991). Respondent AC gives an example of how s/he teaches grammar in this

manner to Question O: “I like the idea of a lot of input of the target language, and then at the end of the cycle, go through the grammar points and connect them to what the input was about”. Some teachers also answer that they create lessons from their students’ texts. Ellis (2002) suggests working with grammar in this manner.

What one should bear in mind is that what a teacher believes they do could be different from what they actually do. In one of the studies that are brought up in the literature review (Borg & Phipps, 2009), the beliefs and practices of teachers at a university are under investigation and the result is that even though the teachers mostly practice in accordance with their beliefs, sometimes they teach in a way that they do not believe in or believe that they did.

6. Conclusion

With the freedom that the syllabi bring, being so open for interpretation, they do not only give teachers a lot of creative freedom, but also a lot of responsibility. There are probably as many interpretations of the syllabi as there are teachers, which will result in no student’s education being the other’s alike. As a few teachers pointed out in the questionnaire: “...I do not teach and think in only one way. That would be to simplify matters significantly. Teaching is much more complicated than that” (Respondent F, Question Z) and “...often in the same classroom, you might have to work in a completely different way” (Respondent O, Question Z). Teaching is a complex action which includes a lot of variation and adapting.

This study is too small to represent the opinions of English teachers in Sweden and it gives only but one analysis of the English syllabi, but it highlights some issues with the present syllabi and some patterns in Swedish English teachers’ opinions. The syllabi do not give any concrete example on how grammar should be taught, but they discourage an audiolingual approach to grammar by refusing to include typical audiolingual exercises as

part of grammatical competence which is a part of the all-around communicative skills. Even though the subject commentaries assist with casting light upon and provide definitions and examples for some expressions mentioned in the syllabi, much is still interpretable and depending on the person reading the syllabi. It requires a close reading of the syllabi to understand that Skolverket thinks that grammar should be taught but since they lack suggestions on how grammar should be integrated into communication-focused teaching, teachers will fill the gaps in the way they think will suit their students and context best.

Depending on how a teacher reads and interprets the syllabi, grammar will play a big or small role. Most of the teachers do not think that the syllabi make any suggestions for grammar instruction but seem to instruct it anyway. This could have to do with that grammar always have been a natural part of language teaching, but also with that most of them think that grammar instruction is an important part of language teaching. These teachers seem to have embraced the new communicative-focused syllabi and teach grammar most similar to the way grammar is taught in CLT. However, there are also instances where teachers answer that they teach grammar in similarity to other methods, such as Long's (1991) focus on form, GTM, or direct method. To vary one's teaching is a clear pattern in the answers from these teachers and most of them do not miss clear suggestions on how they should teach grammar but are satisfied with having the freedom of choosing themselves.

None of the teachers, except for one that answered that s/he uses all the exemplified methods in Question W, in this study seem to use the audiolingual method when teaching grammar, which is the only method that is arguably refused by Skolverket. Most of the teachers seem to have integrated grammar into a more communicative approach to teaching and vary the focus to be on both form and on meaning, talking for Long's theory of focus on form.

The result of this study shows the complexity of interpreting the syllabi when no

explicit suggestions are made and how this could be found both beneficial and problematic for teachers. It shows that the overall focus in the syllabi affects the way in how, in this case, grammar is taught. When the syllabi become more focused on communication, the instruction of grammar also changes to fit in more with the new focus. It also shows that some teachers call for more clarity from Skolverket and that even though most teachers seem to be somehow clear on how to teach grammar, a relatively big insecurity exists among questioned teachers. The fact that there are teachers who feel insecure about how they should teach due to vague instructions from Skolverket and that almost all teachers in this study thought that grammar instruction is an important part of language teaching, speak for that grammar should at least be mentioned in future syllabi.

6.1. Suggestions for Future Research

An aspect that was reflected upon in the commencement of the writing process for this paper was to examine if there is a connection between teachers that have graduated from the same university and how they teach grammar and think about grammar. Research may be made on if educators at teacher-training programs from different universities teach grammar differently and devote a different amount of space for this feature, and whether this impact how future teachers teach and view grammar.

Finally, the students, an important population, should not be forgotten in this discussion. In previous research (Hos & Kekec, 2015), result has shown that students prefer a different method than teachers. Thus, it could be interesting to examine this in a Swedish context to investigate what Swedish pupils think about grammar and what method they may prefer and benefit from the most.

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Appendix 1

Hej!

Mitt namn är Sandra Petersson och jag studerar tredje året på ämneslärarprogrammet på Lunds universitet. Jag håller just nu på att skriva min C-uppsats i engelska där jag undersöker vad kursplanen i engelska för gymnasiet säger om grammatikundervisning och hur aktiva lärare jobbar med grammatik i sin undervisning. Jag har konstruerat en webb-enkät och skulle verkligen uppskatta om du gav mig några minuter av din tid för att svara på den och hjälpa mig med forskningen till min uppsats.

Länk till enkät: <https://goo.gl/forms/6jmHQyVUusx4s6ay2>

Enkäten innehåller runt 20-25 frågor och tar cirka 5-10 minuter att slutföra. Alla svar är anonyma.

Om du är intresserad av att läsa den färdiga uppsatsen när den är färdigställd, är du välkommen att lämna din e-post i slutet av enkäten.

Tack på förhand.

Med vänliga hälsningar, Sandra Petersson

Hello!

My name is Sandra Petersson and I'm in my third year at the teacher education program at Lund University. I am currently writing my Bachelor thesis in English where I am examining what the syllabus for English in the upper secondary school says about grammar instruction and how active teachers work with grammar in their teaching. I have constructed a web-

survey and would appreciate if you could spare me a few minutes of your time to respond to it and thereby help me with the research for my thesis.

Link to the survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/6jmHQyVUusx4s6ay2>

The survey consists of around 20-25 questions and takes approximately 5-10 minutes to conclude. All answers are anonymous.

If you are interested in reading the final essay once it is finished, you are more than welcome to leave your e-mail in the end of the survey.

Thank you for your help.

Yours faithfully, Sandra Petersson

Appendix 2

Grammar Teaching in the Upper Secondary School

The role of grammar in language teaching in Swedish schools is not certain. Even though studies show that many teachers and students find grammar to be an essential part of language teaching, the newest syllabi for English do not have much to say about this matter. My study aims to investigate how active teachers in Swedish schools teach grammar in relation to the syllabi for English. This study will be a part of my essay for the course in educational research which is included in the teacher-training program at Lund University.

This questionnaire consists of about 20-25 questions and statements on attitudes, beliefs, and experience of grammar instruction. It will take about 5-10 minutes to conclude. All answers will be anonymous.

How old are you?

R = Respondent A = Age

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| R | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S |
| A | 62 | 57 | 40 | 54 | 48 | 46 | 37 | 34 | 33 | 37 | 31 | 56 | 38 | 55 | 36 | 39 | 31 | 32 | 59 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| R | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | AA | AB | AC | AD | AE | AF | AG | AH | AI | AJ |
| A | 35 | 62 | 40 | 48 | 58 | 27 | 47 | 37 | 32 | 28 | 61 | 49 | 59 | 65 | 44 | 32 | 37 |

| | | | |
|---|----|----|----|
| R | AK | AL | AM |
| A | 34 | 45 | 44 |

Mean: 44 Mode: 37

How many years of experience do you have of teaching English as a second/foreign language?

0-5 years 5-10 years 10-15 years 15-20 years 20-25 years More than 25 years

| Years of experience | 0-5 years | 5-10 years | 10-15 years | 15-20 years | 20-25 years | More than 25 years |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Respondents | 6 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| % of total | 15.4 | 23.1 | 20.5 | 23.1 | 2.6 | 15.4 |

Grammar in the syllabus for English

In this section, you will answer some questions and statements about how you interpret the syllabus for English in terms of grammar instruction.

A. I feel secure about how Skolverket wants me to teach grammar in my English classes

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 4 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 3 | |
| % of total | 10.3 | 25.5 | 20.5 | 10.3 | 25.6 | 7.7 | |

Mean: 3.2

B. Do you think that the syllabus for English suggests anything specific about grammar instruction?

Yes No I don't know

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|-------------|------|------|--------------|
| Respondents | 4 | 34 | 1 |
| % of total | 10.3 | 87.2 | 2.6 |

B2. *If yes, what do you think it suggests?*

Respondent D: In production and interaction, you automatically practice your grammar when you produce texts for different purposes. In every assignment I have there is a demand for both written and verbal presentations.

Respondent R: focus on communication

Respondent X: That grammar and structures are part of communicative competence.

Respondent AF: Correct language versus informal

Respondent AK: It suggests that I as a teacher provide the students with the tools necessary to be able to develop the ability to express themselves in writing and through speech and this includes grammar.

C. *I would say that I teach grammar in the way that the syllabus suggests.*

Yes No I don't know I don't think that the syllabus suggests anything about how grammar should be taught. Other...

| | Yes | No | I don't know | I don't think that the syllabus suggests anything about how grammar should be taught. | Other... |
|--|-----|----|--------------|---|----------|
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------|---|------|------|-----|
| Respondents | 8 | 0 | 4 | 26 | 1 |
| % of total | 20.5 | 0 | 10.3 | 66.7 | 2.6 |

Other: Respondent N: grammar is taught when I spot the need for it - which unfortunately is more often than it should be... basic grammar!!

D. *Do you wish that the syllabus for English would make more suggestions to how grammar instruction should be performed?*

Yes No I don't know

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|-------------|------|------|--------------|
| Respondents | 19 | 15 | 5 |
| % of total | 48.7 | 38.5 | 12.8 |

E. *Further comments about grammar instruction in the syllabus...*

Respondent K: I like S Kraschen and I feel that the syllabus in English is very much influenced by his works

Respondent L: "Through teaching students should also be given the opportunity to develop correctness in their use of language in speech and writing, and also the ability to express themselves with variation and complexity. In addition, students should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use different strategies to support communication and to solve problems when language skills are inadequate. " This passage could be interpreted as that students should be taught in "grammar" but one may also choose to interpret it as that everything that students do in speech and writing give opportunities to develop their language

even without traditional grammar teaching. Like “learning by doing” and that interpretation is the one I prefer. I most rarely teach about grammatical rules but instead give feedback on students’ individual production. I have worked for 30 years and in the 80s, it was a lot of focus on grammar and exercises, less on communication. I am happy that it is the opposite today! (my translation)

Respondent P: There's an underlying message that grammar is important since it's included in some comments on assessments. But, not any clear instructions.

Respondent Y: I like that it is up to me as the teacher to construct and plan how I teach grammar in my different courses.

Respondent AC: I would be sad if Skolverket went in the direction to pinpoint my way of teaching English. I like to teach grammar in a TBLT way, and other teachers might want to use other methods. But to specify that grammar SHOULD be taught might be an alternative. However, I interpret the knowledge requirements that I need to make sure that the student can master grammar, to be understood in the English language. "In oral and written communications of various genres, students can express themselves in relatively varied ways, relatively clearly and relatively coherently. Students can express themselves with some fluency and to some extent adapted to purpose, recipient and situation"

Respondent AM: It is remarkable that it says nothing about it.

Attitudes and beliefs about grammar instruction

In this section, you will answer some questions and statements about how you believe grammar should be taught and what you think about grammar teaching.

F. I believe that grammar instruction is an important part of language teaching.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 15 | 10 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| % of total | 38.5 | 25.6 | 25.6 | 2.6 | 5.1 | 2.6 | |

Mean: 2.2

G. *I think that grammar is best taught explicitly, as an independent feature.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 9 | |
| % of total | 2.6 | 5.1 | 17.9 | 20.5 | 30.8 | 23.1 | |

Mean: 4.4

H. *I think that grammar is best taught implicitly, included with other features.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|---|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 20 | 13 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| % of total | 51.3 | 33.3 | 10.3 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 0 | |

Mean: 1.7

I. *I believe that one can learn grammar simply by using the target language for oral and written communication.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 2 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 4 | |
| % of total | 5.1 | 15.4 | 28.2 | 25.6 | 15.4 | 10.3 | |

Mean: 3.5

J. I believe that students learn a second or foreign language more accurately if they are exposed to explicit grammar instruction.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 5 | 12 | 12 | 7 | 1 | 2 | |
| % of total | 12.8 | 30.8 | 30.8 | 17.9 | 2.6 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 2.9

K. I believe that it is easier to learn a language if regularly exposed to explicit grammar instruction.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 5 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 1 | |
| % of total | 12.8 | 25.6 | 30.8 | 15.4 | 12.8 | 2.6 | |

Mean: 3.1

L. I believe that one can learn a second or foreign language without explicit grammar teaching.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 5 | 11 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 7 | |
| % of total | 12.8 | 28.2 | 20.5 | 7.7 | 12.8 | 17.9 | |

Mean: 3.2

M. *I don't think that any grammar instruction is needed in the English as a second/foreign language classroom.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|---|-----|-----|------|------|----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 23 | |
| % of total | 0 | 2.6 | 5.1 | 17.9 | 15.5 | 59 | |

Mean: 5.2

N. *I believe that explicit grammar instruction disturbs the production of language and thereby hurts communication in the target language.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|---|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 0 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 7 | 12 | |
| % of total | 0 | 10.3 | 10.3 | 30.8 | 17.9 | 30.8 | |

Mean: 4.4

O. *Further comments about attitudes and personal beliefs about grammar instruction...*

Respondent L: I believe that explicit grammar instruction could be beneficial in lower grades (secondary school) but not necessarily in upper secondary school. One needs explanations for certain things when one is a new learner of a language. I don't think it is as important on higher levels. The language grows with an expanding vocabulary through reading lots of literature and factual texts. As part of the reading, one gets expressions and grammatical finesse. Through listening and producing English, one learns as well. (my translation)

Respondent N: If grammar was something each and every student acquired naturally without ever being taught... no Swedish student would ever make mistakes in Swedish. Unfortunately not every student "hears" what is correct and what is not

Respondent P: How and when you teach grammar also depends on the student's age, and previous knowledge

Respondent Z: It always depends on the student

Respondent AD: I like the idea of a lot of input of the target language, and then at the end of the cycle, go through the grammar points and connect them to what the input was about.

Experience of grammar instruction

In this section, you will answer some questions and statements about how you teach grammar in your classrooms.

P. I use English when explaining grammatical rules and structures.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 8 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 2 | |
| % of total | 20.5 | 20.5 | 25.6 | 17.9 | 10.3 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 3.0

Q. I use Swedish when explaining grammatical rules and structures.

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 3 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 7 | |
| % of total | 7.7 | 28.2 | 23.1 | 10.3 | 12.8 | 17.9 | |

Mean: 3.4

R. *I focus on form when teaching grammar, e.g. drill grammatical rules, ask display questions, use direct error feedback, use exercises where learners fill in gaps with the correct grammatical form.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 2 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 5 | 2 | |
| % of total | 5.1 | 20.5 | 28.2 | 28.2 | 12.8 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 3.4

S. *I focus on meaning when teaching grammar, e.g. using authentic language to show the grammar in use but not talk about it, asking referential questions, using two way tasks.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 4 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 0 | |
| % of total | 10.3 | 30.8 | 33.3 | 15.4 | 10.3 | 0 | |

Mean: 2.8

T. *I address grammatical structures and rules before I let my students work with them.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 4 | 9 | 15 | 6 | 3 | 2 | |
| % of total | 10.3 | 23.1 | 38.5 | 15.4 | 7.7 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 3.2

U. *I let my students find grammatical structures and rules on their own.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 3 | 4 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 2 | |
| % of total | 7.7 | 10.3 | 25.6 | 30.8 | 20.5 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 3.6

V. *If I let my students find grammatical rules themselves, I address the rule afterwards.*

| Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|-------------------|
| Number of responses | 7 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 8 | 2 | |
| % of total | 17.9 | 20.5 | 30.8 | 5.1 | 20.5 | 5.1 | |

Mean: 3.1

W. *I usually use a specific method when teaching grammar (examples: grammar-translation method, communicative approach, audiolingualism, direct method).*

Yes No I don't know Other...

| | Yes | No | I don't know | Other... |
|------------|------|------|--------------|----------|
| Respondent | 9 | 21 | 6 | 3 |
| % of total | 23.1 | 53.8 | 15.4 | 7.7 |

Other: Respondent N: I use various methods

Respondent AC: I mix a lot (TBLT and PPP which is the two methods I am familiar with. I guess I use other methods but do not know the names for those methods), but I really want to use TBLT. Due to other reasons this does not apply as much as I want to.

Respondent AF: different depending on which class

W2. *If yes, which do you use?*

Respondent A: direct method

Respondent V: They work with a grammar textbook called Cambridge Grammar in Use. Each student completes a diagnostic test and from their builds an individual course in which they idependently work with in class. They have the rules and answer key and I am there in the classroom if they need any extra help. This way each student has an individual tailor made grammar course.

Respondent X: based on what is needed in the group, I go through different aspects (I have a "hidden" agenda.

Respondenet AB: all of the above (i.e. GTM, com. Audio. Direct)

Respondent AD: grammar-translation, communicative approach

Respondent AI: i communicate directly with them

Respondent D: Communicative approach

X. *I have taught grammar with help from... (you may choose more than one option)*

On its own Literature Music Movies Social Media Internet Newspapers

Textbooks Games Online material for teaching grammar Other...

| | Respondents | % of total |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| On its own | 30 | 76.9 |
| Literature | 27 | 69.2 |
| Music | 18 | 46.2 |
| Movies | 9 | 23.1 |
| Social Media | 14 | 35.9 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|------|
| Internet | 23 | 59 |
| Newspapers | 20 | 51.3 |
| Textbooks | 34 | 87.2 |
| Games | 21 | 53.8 |
| Online material for teaching grammar | 30 | 76.9 |
| Other | 4 | 10.3 |

Y. Further comments on personal experiences of grammar instruction...

Respondent AH: I usually use Swedish for grammar in En5, and English in En6 &7.

Thank you for your help! You submit your answers on the next page.

If you are interested in reading the outcome of this project, feel free to leave your e-mail and I will send you my study when it is finished. If you have any further comments on the subject, I would be happy to hear them. Remember that your answers will be submitted on the next page. Once again, thank you for your help!

Z. Further comments on the subject...

Respondent F: It is impossible to answer many of your questions really, since I do not teach and think in only one way. That would be to simplify matters significantly. Teaching is much more complicated than that.

Respondent O: Note that grammar teaching varies a great deal depending on each individual in the classroom. Therefore it was quite difficult for me to feel completely satisfied with my answers to many questions. Basically because some methods of teaching grammar work well

with one student but with another student, often in the same classroom, you might have to work in a completely different way. Looking forward to read the essay once it's finished.

Respondent P: I think grammar is important, both for new learners (for ex newly arrived from other countries) and also to develop one's language and reach a more advanced level of English.

Respondent Z: I mainly teach grammar in connection to texts students have written. I collect the most common mistakes and create lessons around those.

If you are interested in reading my final essay, please write your e-mail below...
