Grammar exercises in English textbooks

An analysis of exercises in English textbooks in Sweden

Author: Emelie Olsson

Supervisor: Dr. Claes Lindskog

Term: Fall 2019

Course: ÄEND04 English IV

Individual Research Project (15 hp)

English Teacher Education

Abstract

The role of grammar in language teaching has been a highly debated topic for several years. With the debate on how grammar should be taught, textbooks are one way of investigating how grammar is taught currently in schools. This study investigates how grammar exercises are incorporated in English textbooks for English 6 in upper secondary in Lund. Through a questionnaire and an analysis of grammar exercises in the three English textbooks Context 2, Viewpoint 2, and Blueprint B the study investigates how the exercises can be categorized. The focus is on categorization after the task type that the exercise requests. Furthermore, the study investigates if there is any connection between the categories and the cognitive, behaviorist, and communicative perspectives of language theories. The study finds that the cognitive and behaviorist perspective can be connected to the three most frequently occurring exercise categories, gap sentences, rewrite sentences and translation exercises. Furthermore, the results also show that there is a significant difference between the number of exercises in the three most occurring categories which contain 86 percent of the exercises in the three books. The remaining 14 percent contains the three categories, pair work, create sentence, and meta-questions. These results suggest that there is a difference between different textbooks and the exercise types that they provide. The essay final gives suggestions on how these results can be taken into consideration when working with grammar and textbooks.

Table of Content

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim

Grammar, or more accurately, the teaching of grammar has been up for debate for many years. The question about which role grammar has in language learning has engaged both theorists, teachers and students. That grammar has become an element that just needs to be checked off is evident in many ways. To take an example, two grammar books, one aimed at English teachers and one aimed to university students of English, both contain a chapter or section titled "Why teach grammar at All?" (Cowan, 2008, p.28), "What's the point in studying grammar?" (Vannestål, 2015, p.19). Despite the debate of grammar's role in language acquisition, there is still an expectation on learners to control use of grammar.

The expectation of students being able to control their grammar use and whether one considers the teaching of grammar an important part of the language teaching or not can be tied to which theory of second language learning one subscribes to. A teacher that subscribes to the communicative approach would include many activities that encourage interactions since, according to the communicative approach, language is learned through interactions and communication between learners (Lightbown & Spada, 2018, pp.165-166).

The different language learning theories have quite different views on grammar teaching and because of this it would be interesting to investigate whether only one or several of them are noticeable in the language teaching in Sweden today. Since there are equally as many versions of language teaching as there are language teachers this essay will focus on English as a second language taught in Upper secondary schools in Lund in the south of Sweden. To further narrow down and make the material manageable this study has looked into the exercises of grammar in textbooks used in English 6 in upper secondary schools in Lund. A more detailed description of the material and limitations for this study will be presented under the methodology section further ahead in the essay. By looking at grammar exercises in

textbooks for English 6, this essay aims to investigate how the area of grammar is incorporated in textbooks for English 6 in upper secondary in Sweden.

1.2 Research questions

This essay will investigate how grammar is incorporated in textbooks for English 6 in upper secondary schools in Sweden. For this study, three research questions have been constructed and they will be introduced in this section. The three research questions are presented in the order that they have been asked in this study. Research question one was asked first and to answer that research question an answer was needed for question two which was based on the answer to research question three.

1. Which theory of second language learning are the textbooks, used for English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund, following?

2. Which type of grammar exercises are included in the textbooks used for English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund?

3. Which textbooks are used by English teachers for the teaching of English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund?

These three research questions will serve to answer the question of how grammar is incorporated in textbooks for English 6 used in the municipality of Lund. The first question investigates whether it is possible to find any connection between the exercises in the textbooks and any theory of second language learning. The second question will aid in answering the first research question by providing the exercise types that are used in the textbooks. That information will be used to investigate if there is any type of exercise that is found in a larger quantity than any of the other exercises. Furthermore, the findings of information for this question will be used to investigate and analyze if there are any exercise type and any of the theories of second language learning. The third question, regarding which textbooks that are

used in Lund, will act as a sub-question to the first and second questions by providing the set of textbooks that will be included in the textbook analysis.

2 Background

This section will provide an insight into previous research on the topic as well as providing a picture over how grammar is presented in the policy documents for the Swedish school. First, there will be a summary of the previous research that has been made in the area. Secondly, the following part of the section will discuss the teaching theories that are included in this study. Thirdly, there will follow a section that introduces the theories of second language learning that will be used in this study. Finally, there will be a description of the limitations that have been made in the study.

2.1 Previous Research

Textbook analysis is a well-developed field and there has been a lot of research done when it comes to identity issues, religion, gender and ethnicity representation. There are a few studies done on grammar books. They do similarly to the majority of studies on textbooks investigate gender representation (Lewandowski, 2014) Even though textbooks are improving their work of not reinforce biases and stereotypes, there are still improvements that can be done (Yen, 2000). When it comes to analysis of the grammar component in textbooks, however, there has not been the same amount of investigations done. The majority of grammar analysis that has been done on teaching-related areas has been done about the different types of methods and theories about teaching of grammar. Since this study will compare the grammar exercises with theories of second language learning the focus will be on the theories.

2.2 The Syllabus

Focusing on the teaching of grammar in a Swedish context, specifically on the teaching of grammar in the English subject in upper secondary schools, there are some observations to be made about the syllabi for English in upper secondary schools. The word grammar is not

mentioned a single time in the syllabus for English (Skolverket, English). It is however mentioned once in the commentary material for the English subject (Skolverket, Commentary material). According to the commentary material for English, grammar is one of the components that make up the construct *all-round communicative skills*. The all-round communicative skills also consist of vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, prosody and phraseology (Skolverket, Commentary material, p.2). There is a lot of emphasis put on the communicative skills throughout the syllabi for English in Swedish upper secondary schools. Since grammar is one component of the communicative skills, grammar is therefore an important part of the syllabus even though it does not contain the word grammar.

According to Skolverket (Skolverket, Commentary material, p.4), students are expected to be on the B2.1 level on the CEFR scale after completing the English 6 course in upper secondary. An individual on the B2.1 level is in relation to grammatical accuracy according to CEFR, an individual that "shows relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding." (CEFR, 2001, p.114).

2.3 Theories of language learning

As stated previously, this essay will investigate whether there is a connection between the grammar exercises that are present in the English textbooks and some of the theories of second language learning. Some of the more well-known theories about language learning and second language acquisition are the behaviourist perspective, the cognitive perspective and the sociocultural perspective. Initially, this section introduces Bloom's taxonomy which is a way of visualizing levels of knowledge and their relation to each other. The following section will then provide the base and core ideas that these perspectives have on language learning and provide examples on exercises that these perspectives promotes for language learning.

2.3.4 Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a visual overlook of the level of cognitive knowledge and skills that go behind different process dimensions. The taxonomy is a table that consists of skills visualised as a staircase (Coyle, 2010). The figure consists of six levels of cognitive process skills that are split into three levels of higher-order processing and three levels of lower-order processing (pp. 30-31). The three lower levels require students to remember, understand and apply terms, processes and concepts, while the higher levels require the learners to analyse, evaluate and create. This figure builds on the cognitive perspective and like in the cognitive perspective the lower levels must be mastered before the higher levels can be reached.

The behaviourist perspective views language learning as a process of habit formation, where repetition, feedback and practice are important (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.103). The Innatist perspective disregards the behaviourist perspective and instead argue that language is acquire during a specific time in life and that we are programmed with all information we need to acquire language knowledge (pp.104-105). Following the theme of programming, the cognitive perspective argue that language acquisition is a process of sorting, categorizing and generalizing. Similar to the behaviourist perspective, the cognitive perspective recognize that repetition and practice are a big part of the process of acquiring a language (p.108). Finally, the sociocultural perspective is a social process where thinking and speaking are viewed as tightly tied together (Lightbown and Spada, 2013, p.118).

2.3.1 The behaviourist perspective.

The teaching proposal *Get it right from the beginning* can be connected to the behaviourist perspective (Ligthbown and Spada, 2018). By repeating fixed structures and forms this proposal aims to succeed in teaching learners the correct forms and structures while avoiding errors. Part of the behaviourist perspective is structure-based tasks which is described as drilling of decontextualized structures through, an example mentioned, gap sentences (pp.154-155).

Further, grammar translation which is a method, also under behaviourism, encourages the explicit teaching of grammatical structures and rules (Memon, Abbasi and Umrani, 2016, p. 268). This approach does not encourage reflection or any other form of thought process regarding the learning process. Instead it is only a matter of repeating the correct structure or form (Lightbown and Spada, 2018, pp.154-155). Grammar translation is an approach of language teaching that has been used since the teaching of Latin and is therefore used around the world in a broad range of language teaching situations (Lightbown & Spada, 2018; Memon, Abbasi, Umrani, 2016; Zhou, Niu, 2015).

2.3.2 The communicative perspective

In the communicative approach the explicit grammar instructions have less focus than the previous grammar translation. Instead, the focus of the communicative approach is communicative activities (Terrell, 1991, p.53). The communicative approach emphasizes comprehensible stimulus and interactions in form of conversations. Furthermore, they connect the communicative approach to a teaching proposal called *Let's talk* (Lightbown and Spada, 2018, p.165). *Let's talk* builds on the idea that learners will acquire the structures, forms and vocabulary necessary through discussions, argumentation, negotiation and interaction with other learners or the teacher. Task-based activities where learners work together, negotiation and interacting to complete a goal or task are examples of activities that follow the communicative approach (pp.165-166).

Even though exercises with a communicative approach generally have the purpose to build the learners' fluency communicative tasks can be used to practice learners' knowledge on form (Ellis, 2015). The focus on form does not happen spontaneously, instead it requires the teacher to create content and exercises that create room for form focused discussions and reflections (p.9).

2.3.3 The Cognitive perspective

In some ways similar to the communicative perspective is the cognitive perspective which advocates learning through interaction, experience and practice (Lightbown & Spada, 2018). On the topic of interaction and practice they are agreeing that the learner needs to be exposed to stimuli of the language that they aim to learn. The perspectives differ, however, in the way that the cognitive perspective advocates that learning of language consists of building knowledge about the language. In other words, the cognitive perspective views explicit learning and meta-instructions as a way of improving the language learning while the communicative perspective supports a more implicit teaching method.

According to the cognitive perspective there is however a maximum amount of knowledge that a learner can acquire at the same time. The maximum amount is connected to the short-term memory which only have a limited amount of capacity. To be able to store a larger amount of knowledge it must be transferred into our long-term memory. The process of transferring knowledge from the short-term memory is referred to as autotomizing knowledge. The reason behind the aim that the knowledge becomes autotomized, which it does through repeated meetings with the concept or process, is that autotomized knowledge takes up less space and capacity in our short-term memory. The freed-up space can then be used to acquire be used to acquire more knowledge that can be autotomized (pp.108-109). Similar to the behaviourist perspective, the cognitive perspective emphasizes the frequency that the learner encounters the concept that they want to learn. The cognitive perspective is an advocate for repetitive exercises so that the learner encounters the concept multiple times and with a high frequency so that there can be an automatization of the knowledge (pp.109-111).

2.4 Limitations

Because of the time limitation of this essay, there was a narrow amount of data collected. The limitations that have been made concerning location, grade and amount will be

described in this section. In terms of location limitations have been made to concern theoretical aimed public upper secondary schools in the municipality of Lund. There have also been limitations made to the theories about second language acquisition. The three language theories that are included in this essay have been selected because they connect to the types of exercises that was found in the analysis of the textbooks. These theories have also been present during a large part of The English Teacher Education at Lund University. They are therefore deemed to be reliable and well known theories from the language acquisition field. The questionnaire was distributed to all current English teachers in the theoretical aimed upper secondary schools in Lund. The limitation to theoretical aimed schools has been made since English 6 is not a course included in the group of courses that are common for all upper secondary schools in Sweden. English 6 is more common in the programs that are theoretical aimed than in the programs that are vocational aimed.

This investigation will only look into physical textbook material and will therefore not include electronical textbooks or exercises through online services. For this essay the analysis will only include the independent grammar section of the textbooks. The reason for this is that it is difficult to determine whether the text tied exercises are practicing the knowledge of grammar or vocabulary. In the independent grammar sections however, the exercises are explicitly formatted to practice the knowledge and therefor determined by the author or authors.

3. Methodology

This essay contains two different sections of methodology. The first method is a questionnaire that was used to collect data that will be used to determine which textbooks that will be analysed and included in this research project. The second method is a close reading that analyses and categorizes the grammar exercises in the textbooks that have be selected based on the result in the first method, the questionnaire.

3.1 Questionnaire

The collection of data was made with the quantitative research method questionnaire. Questionnaires are a good method to collect a larger amount of data and by using open questions more information can be extracted from the responses then from closed questions (Nunan, 1992, p. 143) The questionnaire was sent out to English teachers in upper secondary schools. The questionnaire contained only one question, asking the participants to state the textbook that they use in their teaching of English 6. Because of time limitation, the survey sampling was made with a combination of cluster and stratified strategy. Cluster sampling is when the sampling is restricted to one subgroup of the population (Nunan, 1992, p.142), in this questionnaire the subgroup was English teachers in the theoretical aimed upper secondary schools in a particular municipality. Stratified sampling is when the sampling is made in a systematic way (Nunan, 1992 p.142), the strategy for this questionnaire was to select every individual that fits the criteria for the cluster selection. As a result of the selection, the participants were sampled after the criteria of being English teachers and to currently be working at a public upper secondary school in the municipality of Lund.

To summarize, a one question questionnaire, asking for the title of the textbook the participant would use for English 6, was sent out through email to all teachers that were listed as English teachers on the school websites belonging to the three theoretical aimed upper secondary schools in Lund. In total, the questionnaire was sent to 71 potential participants with the time to respond of one work week. The number of participants that answered the questionnaire was six participants. Out of the six answers, five answers referred to physical textbooks while one, Digilär, referrers to an online resource (see table 1). As stated in the limitation section, this analysis will only look into the material of physical textbooks and the grammar sections that they contain. This gives the result of five answers out of 71 asked participants, which gives a respond rate of 7 percent. Out of these five answers, three mention

the textbook Blueprint B with a difference in edition. These 3 answers stand for 60 percent of the total answer, which, even though the total number of participants is not very high, is a significant number. The remaining 40 percent are split into 20 percent, one response, of Context 2 and 20 percent, one response, for Viewpoints 2.0.

Responses to the questionnaire.

Textbook:	Number of responses:
Blueprint B	3
Viewpoints 2.0	1
Context 2	1
Digilär	1

Table 1. The answers from the questionnaire.

The results from the questionnaire was used to determine which textbooks that would be included in the second part of this study, the textbook analysis. Following the result of the questionnaire the following textbooks will be included in the analysis of textbooks; Blueprint B (2008), Viewpoints 2.0 (2018) and Context 2 (2012).

3.2 Method for analysis of Textbooks

The second part is a close reading of textbooks used for English 6. Close reading is a research method, where a text or other object is analysed with the purpose of finding a pattern, theme or other characteristics (Harvard Collage Writing Center, 2019). In this essay the close reading aims to compare and contrast a number of textbooks with the purpose of finding patterns in the grammatical areas that are featured in the textbooks. The close reading also serves the purpose of investigating whether the textbooks appeal to any of the language acquisition theories that have been mentioned previously in the essay.

To determine which language acquisition theory the textbooks appeal to, the grammar exercises in the books will be categorised according to what the exercise asks the learner to do. The categories will then be compared to the language theories to see which learning method they can be linked to. An exercise that builds on imitation and would for example appeal to the behaviourist perspective which, as mentioned previously, builds on repetition and practice. The categories will then be compared over the textbooks to see whether any of them have a higher amount of exercises that appeal to one theory compared to the other books. When categorizing the exercises, the whole exercise will be counted as one unit even though it might contain several items. This is done to done for several reasons. One reason being to make it possible to execute the study with in the given time. A second reason is to see if the study is possible to execute and then use it as a pilot study for future developments and studies.

This following section will highlight these features and the work that has been done to strengthen the validity and reliability of this study and analysis. The analysis is based on the categorization of grammar exercises. This categorization and analysis have been made by the researcher of this essay, which could weaken the reliability since the researcher may unintentionally put in their subjectivity when categorizing the exercises. To minimize the chance of this happening, descriptions of the different categories have been created and examples of the exercises in each category have been provided to enable future research to build on this study.

The questionnaire had a very low response rate and the sample of this study is therefore not representative for the textbooks that are used by English teacher for English 6 in the theoretical aimed upper secondary schools in Lund. Since it is not possible to generalize the sample to the English 6 courses in Lund it is neither possible to generalise the sample to a

broader population of teachers. It is however, as mentioned previously, significant that 60 percent of the answers were the same textbook.

3.3 Presentation of the textbooks

Viewpoint 2 (2018) was one of the responses in the questionnaire result. The textbook is written by two active English teachers in the south of Sweden and is written for English 6 in upper secondary school. The grammar appears in the book in two ways; after each text with exercises that are directly tied to the text, or in the grammar section which a section that is independent of the texts (2018, p. preword). Context 2 (2012) written by Cutler and Holmberg is another textbook that is aimed for English 6 in upper secondary school. Similar to Viewpoint 2, Context 2 contains both grammar exercises directly after the texts and in a separate independent grammar section. Blueprint B (2008) also contains grammar exercises after each text that are directly tied to the texts, as well as a separate grammar section independent from the texts. For this essay the analysis will only include the independent grammar section of the textbooks.

The Context 2 (2012) has a content table for the grammar section and its title headings are Nouns, Articles, Pronouns, Adjectives and adverbs, Word order, Conjunctions, Verbs and Contracted sentences. Blueprint (2008) has a section titled *focus on language* and its main headings are Formal and informal English, Plural, Apostrophes, Pronouns, Adverbs, Verbs and Prepositions (p.261). Viewpoints 2 (2018) contains the following main headings in its content table over its grammar section, Verbs, Nouns, Articles, Adjectives, Adverbs, Pronouns, Linking words, Formal and informal language, Common irregular verbs (p.235).

3.4 Framework for analysis of textbook exercises

This section will present how the analysis in this study was constructed. It will also present the parameters that were taken into consideration and the different ways that the exercises can be categorized according to.

3.4.1 Analysis based on task type

To make the analysis of the grammar exercises, the exercises have been divided into categories based on which task they require the learner to do. The categories were found through a brief pilot study. In the pilot study all grammar exercises from the three textbooks were analyzed to find a way of categorizing them. The categories that were found are used in this study. Below is a table (table 2) containing the six categories of exercises that was found in the analysis of the grammar exercises in the pilot study. The categories are presented along with a brief summary of the description of the category. Following are a more detailed description of each of the categories along with the criteria that were designed to for each category to make it clear what the exercises in each category require of the learner. The descriptions also provide examples to show how the different categories require different skills or abilities of the learner. These descriptions and examples are provided to show how the categorization of the grammar exercises was made and how exercises that seem to belong to two different categories were categorized.

Category name	Definition
Translate exercise	when the exercise requires the learner to translate a sentence or word form one language to another.
Fill in the gap exercise	when the exercise requires the learner to fill in a gap in a provided sentence, both when words are provided and not.
Rewrite sentences with keywords exercise	when the exercise requires the learner to rewrite the provided sentence/s using the keywords provided.
Create sentences with keywords exercise	when the exercise requires the learner to complete a provided sentence.
Meta questions exercise	questions that requires the learner to motivate or reply to a question instead of the other categories.
Pair work exercise	exercises that explicitly ask the learners to work in pair.

Table 2. Definitions of the exercise categories

If an exercise contained multiple steps that separately would belong to different categories, the exercise was assigned to the category that corresponded with the most important step in the solving process. An example would be an exercise that asks the learner to fill in the gaps in the provided sentences by translating the words provided in Swedish. The following is an example from Context 2 "Translate the words in brackets and complete the sentences. Choose from the box." (Context 2, 2012, p.284). This exercise has been assigned the category translate exercise since the most crucial step to complete the exercise is to be able to translate the provided Swedish word into English. Another example on an exercise in this category would be the following exercise "Translate. Use the ing-form or the past participle." (Blueprint B, 2008, p.271). This exercise requires the learner to translate provided sentences from Swedish to English and to choose between the ing – form and the past participle. The most important step in this exercise is to translate the sentences and that is why the exercise is assigned to the translate category. The decision to assign a multiple category exercise to only one category have been chosen to give this type of exercise as one whole to one category instead of splitting it in half (0,5). Splitting an exercise would have made it harder to visualize since if multiple exercises were split they would create one whole exercise and it would be difficult to show those half exercises in a clear way.

An exercise that would be assigned the category fill in the gap exercise is an exercise that requires the learner to fill in blank spaces in a sentence or longer text. This type of exercises can be constructed in multiple ways. The first way that a fill in gap exercise can be constructed is that it provides a word at the end of a sentence that the learner is supposed to put into the gap by modifying it by either changing the tense, form or inflection. The following exercise is an example of an exercise that follows this construction "In each sentence (1-20) there is a noun in **bold.** Complete the sentences by writing the correct form of a verb (be or have) and/ or a demonstrative pronoun (this, that, these, those) in the gap(s)." (Viewpoints 2.0,

2018, p.248). A second way is that the exercise provides multiple words or phrases in a box and that the learner is asked to decide which word or phrase that should belong in which gap in the provided sentences. The second construction usually contains a part of the first construction by requiring that the learner modifies the word or phrase out over deciding which word belongs in which gap sentence. The following example of a fill in the gap exercise is constructed in a way similar to the second construction that has been presented above. The exercise gives the following instructions "In the box there are 15 nouns. Choose the correct alternative for each gap in the 15 sentences below and put the noun in the right form." (Viewpoints 2.0, 2018, p.246)

Rewrite sentences with keywords exercises are exercises that requires the learner to rewrite provided sentences. Like the previous category, this category contains exercises that are constructed in somewhat different ways even though they have the same base of construction and require the same knowledge of the learner. The first exercise construction requires the learner to rewrite provided sentences and substitute a specified word in the sentence for another provided word. The following is an example of an exercise from that has been the rewrite category and that is constructed in this way "Rewrite each sentence four times using each of the linking words above (altering between the last two)" (Blueprint B, 2008, p.268).

The second way that the rewrite exercises are constructed are by requiring that the learner rewrites the provided sentences without providing any words to substitute with or without specifying which words that should be substituted. Instead, the exercise requires the learner to rewrite the provided sentences to fit a certain level of formality or tense. The difference between these two constructions of the exercises is that the first construction focuses on the substitution of certain words with other provided or unprovided words, while the second construction focuses on the process of rewriting a provided sentence into a certain level of formality or tense. This following exercise is an example of this second way of constructing rewrite exercises "Rewrite the sentences in a more formal style so that they contain the passive

form of the words given in capitals." (Blueprint B, 2008, p.264). This particular exercise requires the learner to change both the formality to a higher formality as well as the changing the active form into a passive form.

Create sentences with keywords exercises are exercises that requires the learner to complete provided sentences. This type of exercises encourages the learners' creative skills by asking the learner to create sentences containing a provided set of words as in the following exercise "Write your own sentences expressing reasons. Use the following words:" (Blueprint B, 2012, p.267). Another construction of this category of exercises is the following exercise that similar to the previous example gives the learner freedom for creativity "Create a quick 10 question survey. Choose a topic and write 10 questions using do/did constructions where necessary." (Context 2, 2012, p.297).

Meta question exercises are questions rather than exercises that requires the learner to motivate or reply to a question instead of completing a task like the other exercise categories require. These exercises ask questions that the learners need to write a short answer to or in any other way respond to in a way that is not able to be assigned to the other categories that have been presented in this category description. This exercise is a meta question that requires the learner to give a short answer and reason for their answer "Which 3 sentences would not make much sense to a native English-speaker because they have strange tense combinations? They are all based on well-known sayings." (Context 2, 2012, p.300).

The final exercise category is the pair work exercises that are exercises that explicitly ask the learners to work in pairs. This following example from Context 2 asks the learners to discuss and negotiate the mistakes in the provided sentences "Work in pairs. Discuss and correct the following sentences. Not all sentences have mistakes in them." (2012, p.276) The focus and main task is to discuss the sentences even though the skill of correction also is needed to solve the exercise.

3.4.2 Analysis of open-ended and closed exercises

The analysis will also look into whether the exercises allow the learner to write longer texts, create something of their own or whether the answers are expected to be short and narrow. An exercise that requests a translation, an inflection of a word or in another way limited and constricted answer would be deemed to be a closed exercise. On the contrary, an exercise that requests or encourage a longer, freer answer by encourage the learner to use their creativity would be deemed an open-ended exercise.

3.4.3 Analysis of higher-order and lower-order skill

A third way to categorize exercises is by the level of knowledge that is needed to solve the exercise. As mentioned previously Bloom's taxonomy is a way of organizing levels of knowledge. The taxonomy ranks the levels from lower to higher and contains the following levels; remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. If an exercise requires the learner to use one of the three first presented skills it would be deemed as a lower-order exercise, while an exercise that requests one of the later three skills it would be deemed a higher-order exercise. An exercise usually requires several skills since the higher levels builds on the lower levels. For this reason, it is the skill that is highest on the taxonomy that determines which level the exercise is considered to request.

4 Results

This section presents the findings of the textbook analysis and will due to time and space limitations only include the categorisation based on task type. Other categorisation parameters will be discussed in the analysis.

The result of the analysis of the exercise categories has been entered in the tables below both in count of exercises (table 3) as well as in percentage (table 4). From the categories is it clear that the categories *fill in the gap, translate* and *rewrite with keywords* are the categories that have been assigned to the majority of the exercise while the categories *create*

17

sentences, meta questions and *pair work* have a low number of exercises assigned to them. Context 2 and Viewpoints 2.0 have the highest percentages of exercises in the category of fill in the gap exercise, with 47% respectively 67%. Blueprint B has the highest percentages of exercises in the category of rewrite with keywords with a percentage of 38%.

Textbook	Translate	Fill in the gap	Rewrite with keywords.	Create sentences	Meta questions	Pair work	Number of exercises in total
Context 2	21	35	2	7	7	2	74
Blueprint B	12	14	18	4	0	0	48
Viewpoints 2.0	6	16	1	0	1	0	24

Table 3. The number of exercises in each category presented by each textbook.

Textbook	Translate	Fill in the gap	Rewrite with keywords.	Create sentences	Meta questions	Pair work	Number of exercises in total
Context 2	28%	47%	3%	9%	9%	3%	74
Blueprint B	25%	29%	38%	8%	0%	0%	48
Viewpoints 2.0	25%	67%	4%	0%	4%	0%	24

Table 4. The percentages of exercises in each category presented by each textbook. (Note, the percentages for Context 2 do not add up to 100 because the decimals have been rounded up and down.)

It is significant to note that none of the categories of create sentences, meta questions or pair work has a percentage of 10 percentage or higher from neither of the three textbooks. The categories of translate and fill in the gap both have percentages of 25 percent or higher from all the three textbooks. The category of rewrite with keywords has 38 percentages of exercises from Blueprint B while only two percentages from Context 2 and four percentages from Viewpoints 2.0.

It is also worth noticing that the categories create sentences and meta questions stands for zero percentages of exercises in Viewpoints 2.0 and Blueprint B. Additionally, both these textbooks also contain zero percentages of exercises in the category pair work.

In the two tables below the number of exercises in each category (table 5) and the percentage (table 6) of the total number of exercises are presented. The two tables provide a picture of how the total amount of exercises, in the three textbooks, are spread out over the different exercise categories. While the previous two tables present the categories with each book separately, the following tables provides a different perspective by providing a summary of the spread over the categories. The biggest category is the fill in the gap category with 45 percentages and the two following categories are the translate category standing for 27 percentages and the rewrite with keywords category standing for 14 percentages. The categories with lowest percentages are the pair work category with one percentage, the meta question category with five percentages and finally the create sentence category with eight percentages.

Exercise category	Translate	Fill in the gap	Rewrite with keywords.	Create sentences	Meta questions	Pair work	Number of exercises in total
Number of exercises	39	65	21	11	8	2	146

Table 5.

Exercise category	Translate	Fill in the gap	Rewrite with keywords	Create sentences	Meta questions	Pair work	Number of exercises in total
Percentage of exercises	27%	45%	14%	8%	5%	1%	146

Table 6.

By looking at these tables, it is clear that there are significant differences between the categories both in terms of the spread of exercises within each textbook, but also the spread of exercises between the three textbooks. These results will be analyzed in the following analysis section.

5 Analysis

5.1 Analysis of the result from the analysis of the grammar exercises

The three most frequently occurring exercises in the three textbooks are the fill in the gap exercises, the translate exercises and the rewrite with keywords exercises. These three categories all require the learner to make smaller and often repetitive changes to the sentences or material provided in the exercises. The three least frequent occurring exercises in the textbooks are the pair work exercises, the meta question exercises and the create sentences exercises. All these three categories share the characteristics of leaving space for the learners' creativity, imagination and reflection. The significant thing to notice is that there is a big gap between the three most frequent exercises, 86 percentages, and the least frequent three, 14 percentages. By looking at the result and percentages, it is evident that the closed exercises are more frequent than the open and freer answer exercises. There can be many different reasons behind this, either because of time and space efficiency or a way to restrict the learners' attention to focus on a single concept at a time.

5.2 Connections between exercises and theories of second language learning

The theories of second language learning presented in the background section each present types of exercise that are promoted and supported by the theory in regard to language learning. To see if any of the types of exercises match to any of the exercises that the language theories promotes the description of the exercises will be compared with each other to see if they are similar in any way.

Apart from the amount of gap exercises that the books contain, the descriptions of the exercises that was constructed during the analysis is similar to the exercises that are promoted by the behaviorist perspective. As discussed in the theoretical section the behaviorist perspective speaks for structure-based such as gap sentences as a way to drill structures in language. The gap exercises in the books are, as described in the method section, constructed in a way that requires the learner to practice and drill structure of the English language. From the result of the exercise analysis it is clear that all three books have a large amount of gap sentences. This suggests that the drilling of grammatical structures is viewed as important or effective method for the textbooks' authors as well. A second category of exercises that can be supported by the behaviorist perspective is the rewrite with keyword category. Similar to the gap exercises, the rewrite exercises are structure-based and drill concepts in a way similar to the way the gap exercises do. A third exercise category that can be tied to the behaviorist perspective is the translation exercises that encourage drilling of grammar through translation similar to grammar-translation within the behaviorist perspective.

The communicative perspective, on the other hand, advocates that language learning takes place through interactions and communications between learners, which supports the pair work exercises. Surprisingly, this perspective only has two exercise according to the exercise analysis and they are both from the same book. This is a surprise since the syllabus for English 6 circles around building the pupils' all-around communicative skills and the communicative perspective would therefore be expected to be a larger part of the exercises in the textbooks. A possible reason for the lack of communicative supported exercises can be found in Ellis's statement that has been mentioned earlier, that the communicative exercises are suitable for improving learners' fluency. This being a possible reason is because the syllabus is not focusing on the learners' fluency but rather their ability to communicate in a variety of situations.

The rewrite exercises are very repetitive and fit the description of the exercise that the cognitive perspective advocates. The exercises presented in this category requires the learner to rewrite the same sentences between one and four times which means that the learner will encounter both the words and the sentence structure multiple times and with a high frequency. This will result in that the learners automatizes the words and structures faster than they would if they had encountered them fewer times. It may however not be enough to encounter a word only four times but since the exercises often have at least four sentences and four keywords the learner will encounter each concept at least sixteen times.

As mentioned previously, the gap exercises also provides repetition which is advocated to be a good exercise by the behaviorist perspective. The difference between the two categories is that the gap exercise only requires the learner to fill in one word while the rewrite exercise requires the learner to rewrite the whole sentence. This results in that the learner has to pay attention to both the form and structure and form of the individual as well as the form and structure of the whole sentence. It is, however, possible that the learner only focuses on either the word or the sentence of the rewrite exercise, since the brain only can focus on one type of structure or concept at a time, because of the limitation of brain resources.

From the perspective of Bloom's Taxonomy, the gap exercises, the translate and the rewrite categories are on the lower levels of the taxonomy while the create sentence, meta questions and pair work are on the higher levels of the taxonomy. The three first categories are at the lower three levels since they require the learner to remember, understand or apply a word, process or form, which require knowledge on a lower level according to the taxonomy. Meta questions, pair work, and create sentences on the other hand require the learner to analyze, evaluate and create, which are levels on the higher end of the taxonomy.

As stated in the result section, there is an evidently larger amount of gap exercises, 46 percentages out of the exercises, compared to the other exercise types. As the gap sentences, translation exercises require the learner to recall translations as well as information about words that can fit the gap. Further, the meta questions, create sentences and pair work requires the learner to apply processes and knowledge which are skills that requires a knowledge that are on a higher level in the taxonomy. Another reason for the high number of lower level knowledge exercises can be to consolidate the lower stages to make learner able to retch the higher levels.

6. Discussion

6.1 Implications in the classroom

This study does not categorize these three textbooks as more or less useful compared to other textbooks because of the fact that they focus on some of the exercise categories more than on other categories. On the contrary, it aims to shine light over the existing differences between different textbooks in regard to their grammar exercises. At the same time, it encourages teachers to make informed decisions when choosing a textbook and investigate what material that particular textbook provides and which material you will need to find from other resources.

As teachers, it is good to know what types of exercises the textbooks provide and which types of exercises that need to be provided in another way. From this study it is evident that the three textbooks are good at providing exercises for practicing fill in gaps and translation from one language to another. What the books are not equally as good at providing are exercises that requires pair work, that challenges the learners to use their meta knowledge or to provide learners the space to be creative and use their imagination. These three components will teacher have to find material for in other textbooks or other material. Finally, if learners do not perform well on assessments where they are expected to answer meta questions or create own sentences and structures it might be because they only have practiced in one of these or any other textbook

that do not provide these types of exercises, that might be the reason to why they not are preforming well.

That the majority of grammar exercises in the textbooks use a cognitive-behaviorist perspective shows that the two perspectives have a big role in the teaching of grammar in second language learning of English. In other words, repetition, imitation are crucial processes for learning grammar, while discussion and implicit teaching not is equally as effective. Depending on one's view of these perspectives this can be either a positive or negative result. The result also shows that the focus of knowledge is on the lower levels in the taxonomy. The positive side of the results in this study is that the textbooks lay down a base layer of grammar knowledge through repetition. The negative side is that the textbooks lack a broader range of exercises, teaching methods and higher levels of knowledge. As mentioned previously, teachers need to decide what their aims are in grammar teaching. It is then crucial that the teacher look into what their choice of textbook provides in terms of exercise types, levels of knowledge and challenges. The lacking parts will then be filled with additional material to provide a fuller material that can help the students reach the aims of the grammar teaching.

7. Conclusion

This study has used the three textbooks; Context 2, Viewpoint 2.0 and Blueprint B, and Bloom's taxonomy as well as the cognitive, communicative, and behaviourist perspective in language learning, to gather material and preform an analysis.

The study has investigated how grammar is incorporated in English textbooks for English 6 in Lund. The research questions from the beginning of the study will now be presented with the conclusion from the study.

1. Which theory of second language learning are the textbooks, used for English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund, following?

24

2. Which type of grammar exercises are included in the textbooks used for English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund?

3. Which textbooks are used by English teachers for the teaching of English 6 at upper secondary schools in Lund?

It is difficult to make clear distinctions between the different theories of language learning since they are linked to each other either by sharing some foundational opinions within the field language learning. In a similar way, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the grammar exercises and which theory of language learning they apply to because of the difficulty to separate the theories and the exercise categories.

The conclusion to the research question one is that the textbooks are following a behaviorist and cognitive theory. This is based on the evidence from the analysis that the categories in majority gap exercises, translation, and rewrite sentences in the books are possible to connect to the two theories. The three most common categories together make up 86 percent of the total number of exercises, which is a significant amount. The hypothesis is that these two perspectives are present in the majority of textbooks used in English 6 since it is present in both the gap exercises and all analyzed textbook, standing for 46 percentages of the exercises.

The answer to research question two is that there are six types of exercises. They are gap sentences, rewrite with keywords exercises, translation exercises, meta questions, pair work and create sentences exercises.

For research question three, the conclusion is that the textbooks that are used are Blueprint B, Context 2 and Viewpoint 2.

References

Primary sources
Context 2

Cutler, T. & Holmberg, K. (2012). *Context 2*. (1. uppl.) Malmö: Gleerups.

Viewpoints 2

Gustafsson, L. & Wivast, U. (2018). *Viewpoints 2*. (Andra upplagan). Malmö: Gleerups.

Blueprint B

Lundfall, C. (2008). *Blueprint: version 2.0. B*. (2. uppl.) Stockholm: Liber.

Secondary sources
Coyle, D., Hood, P. & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: content and language integrated learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2015). The importance of focus on form in communicative language teaching. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 1–12 . http://ejal.eu/index.php/ejal/article/view/50/15 (Retrieved: 2019-12-01)

Gang Zhou, & Xiaochun Niu. (2015). Approaches to Language Teaching and Learning. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, 6(4), 798. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=108369206&site=eds-live&scope=site (retrieved: 2019-12-01)

Harvard Collage Writing Center. (2019) *How to Do a Close Reading.*

https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading retrieved: 2019-11-10

Kommentarmaterial till ämnesplanen i engelska. [Electronic resource]. Stockholm: Skolverket.

https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6011fe501629fd150a28916/1536831518394/Kommentarmaterial_gymnasieskolan_engelska.pdf (retrieved: 2020-01-03)

Lewandowski, M. (2014). Learner perceptions of gender representation in EFL grammar books. *Lingua Posnaniensis, 56*(2), 61-72. doi:http://dx.doi.org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.2478/linpo-2014-0014

Lightbown, P.M. & Spada, N. (2013). How languages are learned. (4. ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskola 2011 [Electronic resource]. (2011). Stockholm: Skolverket.

Memon, M. A., Abbasi, A. M., & Umrani, T. (2016). A Contrastive Analysis of English Language Teaching Methods. *Language in India*, *16*(9), 267–287. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cms&AN=118366527&site=eds-live&scope=site (retrieved: 2019-12-01)

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Terrell, T. (1991). The Role of Grammar Instruction in a Communicative Approach. *The Modern Language Journal, 75*(1), 52-63. doi:10.2307/329834 (retrieved: 2019-12-01)

The council of Europe. (2001). *CEFR.*

Yen, Y. (2000). *Identity issues in EFL and ESL textbooks: A sociocultural perspective* Available from Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA). (85531890; 200107605). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/docview/85531890?accountid=12187 (2020-01-04)