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Communicative Activity in the English Classroom
A Study of Spoken English in Year 5

Kommunikativ aktivitet i det engelska klassrummet
En studie om talad engelska i skolår 5

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to investigate Year 5 pupils’ evaluation of their own abilities regarding spoken English and to see if this is reflected in an individual’s communicative activity and participation in the lesson. This essay also poses the question if it is possible to increase spoken communicative activity in the lesson through a three-week programme of interactive exercises designed to emulate the criteria of the syllabus and the National Test. A class of 24 pupils participated in the study. The material was collected through a pre-study questionnaire and a post-study evaluation, class logbook writing after each activity and my own active observations as teacher.

Results show that although the majority of pupils at this age believe they can cope in a communicative situation in English, this is no guarantee of their active participation in classroom speaking activities. However, communicative activity can be increased with the establishment of the dialogical classroom characterised by genuine discourse, authentic questions and subjects relevant to the age group. At this stage, differences can be witnessed in pupils’ language skills with some able to use language strategies to achieve understanding whilst others rely on translation into their mother tongue. The study concludes that controlled practice helps those pupils with lower self confidence in the subject and pair- or group work maximises participation from all parties. It is essential that the teacher draws on the pupils’ enthusiasm for the subject in order to create a successful forum for language acquisition.

Keywords: communicative activity, dialogical classroom, language strategies, language acquisition, National Test

Nyckelord: dialogiska klassrummet, kommunikativ aktivitet, Nationellt Prov, språkinlärning, språkstrategier
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1 Introduction

In recent decades, research has cited the benefits of a communicative approach to language learning as opposed to traditional grammar-based learning. This modern view of language learning makes itself apparent in the syllabus for English, which states that pupils are to develop “all-round communicative language competence” (www3.skolverket.se). Pupils should develop productive and receptive skills involving the four sub-skills of writing and speaking, reading and listening, which should be used for communicative and interactive purposes. The majority of pupils in Sweden come into contact with the English language on a daily basis in their free time thanks to TV, films and computer games. As a result, pupils gain extensive exposure to and practice of their audio receptive skills which in turn often aids their oral productive skills. These skills can hence be exploited and developed in the communicative English lesson where the use of Swedish is kept to a minimum by all parties.

However, experience as a student teacher has shown me that extensive exposure to the English language is no automatic guarantee of pupil activity in classroom communication, particularly in the younger levels. Despite the lesson being held almost exclusively in the target language and the sufficiency of pupils’ English knowledge for the task in hand, pupil communication in Swedish often occurs. Therefore I have read with interest when Tornberg (1997) discusses in Språkdidaktik that English can be established as the classroom language in Year 5. Therefore, it can be deduced that at this level, pupils already have a sufficient language base for the majority of interaction to occur in English. Unfortunately, a traditionally-structured timetable makes the establishment of the learning conditions Tornberg mentions difficult when lessons are treated as isolated entities occurring several times a week. Nonetheless, it is important that the teacher draws on this language possibility at an early stage and encourages maximum pupil communication and interaction in English. This inspired me to focus on Year 5 in my study.

Authors of Språk för livet, Eriksson and Jacobsson (2001), state that pupils often quote speaking as being the most important skill to be learnt but that little time is allocated for this. Personal experience dictates that, although there is plenty of opportunity for pupils to speak English, communicative situations in the classroom are often dominated by several active individuals, whilst the majority answers seldom or not at all. Great differences can be witnessed in pupils’ confidence and competence when it comes to speaking the target
language. This phenomenon has led me to ponder the attributes of the communicative classroom and to see if a more effective forum for oral production in English than a regular textbook-based lesson can be established. Classes are often of approximately 25 pupils; despite this, it is essential that the teacher creates an environment where all members are able to make their voice heard. This is of relevance to my future teaching career because I believe that it is through the practise of oral skills that younger pupils can gain a heightened interest for English as a school subject. If active participation, enthusiasm and self-confidence of pupils can be achieved in the younger levels, then the benefits may be reflected in their attitudes and performance in the English lesson throughout their school career. Year 5 is of particular significance for my study as a pre-determined level of communicative competence in English must be achieved if pupils are to meet the standard requirements of the National Test. Therefore, I am interested in exploring if it is possible to increase oral communicative activity for the class as a whole irrespective of language ability, at the same time as preparing the pupils for participation in the National Test.

2 Theoretical Background

Firstly, it is essential to establish the benefits of the dialogical classroom in accordance with the theories of modern language research. Once this is achieved, it will be possible to discuss the aspects of communication that such teaching methodology should focus on.

2.1 The Dialogical Classroom

In *Det flerstämmiga klassrummet*, Dysthe (1996) discusses the importance of the dialogical classroom in connection to Bakhtin’s view that life is unavoidably dialogical in nature. According to Dysthe, Bakhtin maintains that in order to live, one must engage in dialogue through asking questions, listening, answering, agreeing and disagreeing. Therefore, the dialogical classroom reflects life outside the classroom. Similarly, Tornberg (1997) explains Vygotsky’s theory that the development of language and knowledge are closely related to social interaction as language is a tool for thought, and language in turn works intrinsically with thought.

Additionally, if the educational environment promotes interaction in the target language, pupils support and learn from each other. Dysthe (1996) discusses how Jerome Bruner referred to this as a “scaffolding” system. When pupils communicate and help each other in
the target language, the lesson becomes pupil-focused rather than teacher-focused. Dysthe (1996) describes the problem of the traditional monological, classroom, which is teacher-focused and allows few pupils to participate. In contrast, the teacher in the dialogical classroom works systematically to promote dialogues ensuring pupil participation, thought and spontaneity. One important characteristic of the dialogical classroom is that it is a safe environment where pupils have been able to get to know each other in order to dare to be active and show their personal sides. Meaning is created collectively in a social group and not by the individual alone. This is achieved when the teacher poses authentic, relevant questions to the class with no predetermined answer. Pupil response is then built on to create a natural and spontaneous dialogue. When lessons are pupil focused and dialogical, real and relevant learning takes place (ibid).

2.2 Communicative Competence
Authors Johnson and Morrow (1981) discuss the traditional view of language competence shared by transformational grammarians such as Chomsky, who believe that language knowledge is equated with knowledge of the language system. However, according to Johnson and Morrow (1981), the researcher Newmark in 1966 discusses the problem of the “structurally competent student”, who has “developed the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences- yet who is unable to perform a single communicative task” (p1). Contrastingly, in “Språksynen i dagens kursplaner”, Malmberg (2001) discusses the researcher Van Ek’s more contemporary view dating from the 1980s that a holistic approach to language learning is needed. Learners can no longer simply rely on their cognitive skills and learn by rote, they must tackle the physical, aesthetic and practical aspects of learning too.

Successful communication is dependent on “communicative competence”, a highly complex process involving a number of different sub-skills. According to Johnson and Morrow (1981), the term “communicative competence” is accredited to the sociolinguist Hymes in 1970, in reaction to Chomsky’s far too simplified and static view of language. They discuss Hymes’ view that language is a living entity used by individuals and societies and “communicative competence” is the pragmatic knowledge of a language shared by native speakers. Naturally, this competence includes grammaticality and the ability to be grammatical, but it incorporates a great deal more skills such as the ability to express oneself appropriately in the target language. Johnson and Morrow (1981) explain further how an utterance must also be “appropriate on very many levels at the same time; it must conform to the speaker’s aim, to
the role relationships between the interactants, to the setting, topic, linguistic context, etc” (p10-11). Oral communication is a spontaneous phenomenon, whereby the speaker’s answer depends on an unpredictable question from the interlocutor and this answer must come quickly if the natural flow of the conversation is not to be disturbed.

A more in-depth insight into the sub-skills involved in communicative language competence is given by Ingvor Sundell (2001) in her article entitled “Från kursplan till klassrum-några reflektioner” She bases her views of what should be dealt with in the language lesson on the all-encompassing guidelines set out by the aforementioned Van Ek. These sub-skills are summarised as follows:

- **linguistic competence** is the ability to produce the language in its correct form. This includes vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

- **socio-linguistic competence** is the ability to suitably adapt the language to the person being addressed. The social ramifications for being incapable of this could be catastrophic as the speaker risks offending the person being addressed.

- **discursive competence** is the ability to achieve language fluency through a successful connection of utterances. This is achieved for example when a response successfully follows a question or statement.

- **strategic competence** is the ability to use language strategies in order to create understanding. This can be achieved through body language, explaining and re-forming utterances that are at first unclear.

- **socio-cultural competence** is the knowledge of how the country of the target language works. When aware of this the speaker can act accordingly in social situations.

- **social competence** is the general ability to initiate and maintain contact with varying individuals. This involves establishing contact with others, making eye contact, listening, waiting turns etc (p39-40).

### 2.3 Target Language

Naturally, when learning a language, it is essential that the learner use the language both receptively and productively. This sub-chapter will look at the theory behind this, as it is reflected in the Curriculum and Syllabus for the subject of English which is discussed in 3.3.
2.3.1 Input Hypothesis

One way for pupils to develop communicative language competence is by exposure to the target language. This is quite simply achieved if the proficiency of the teacher is exploited for the benefit of the pupils. Lightbown and Spada (1999) discuss Stephen Krashen’s innatist theory of second language acquisition from 1982, where he advocates the teacher’s use of the target language. According to Lightbown and Spada, Krashen asserts that the most important way to learn is through being exposed to samples of the second language that one understands. Krashen’s “input hypothesis” is based on the theory that language is only acquired when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input. He asserts that “[i]f the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner’s current level of competence in the language […] then comprehension and acquisition will occur” (p.38). Therefore, if the teacher adapts the target language to a level slightly above that of the pupils, maximum language acquisition in the group will occur. This view is shared by Eriksson and Jacobsson (2001), who add that if the teacher uses language strategies such as explanation, body language and picture drawing in order to convey meaning instead of translation into Swedish, pupils find it easier to understand English, express themselves and develop their own language strategies. 

Essential is that the teacher modifies their spoken target language to suit the learners. Lightbown and Spada (1999) discuss how most language teachers have an intuitive sense for using an adjusted speech style. This speech style is known as “modified input”, “foreigner talk” or “teacher talk” (p.34). In the dialogical classroom, a correct balance must be struck between teacher and pupil talking time as Tornberg (1997) discusses how the language researcher Nunan revealed in 1990 that the teacher spoke a total of 80% of lesson time.

2.3.2 Interlanguage

For individuals learning a new language, errors occur naturally in own production which result in a new version of the target language. Lightbown and Spada (1999) discuss how this process is named “interlanguage” by Selinker in 1972. Interlanguage comes about through a process within the learner whereby the individual subconsciously makes rules and assumptions about the new language. It has “some characteristics influenced by the learner’s previously learned language(s), and some characteristics which seem to be very general and tend to occur in all or most interlanguage systems. Interlanguages are systematic, continually evolving as learners receive more input and revise their hypothesis about the second language” (p.74).
According to Tornberg (1997), a part of interlanguage is that pupils use varying communicative strategies in order to relay meaning and maintain conversation flow when lexical inadequacy occurs. She argues that there are two kinds of communicative strategies used by language learners. Psycholinguistic strategies involve a cognitive process within the individual which helps them either consciously or sub-consciously get the meaning across. Interactive strategies arise in the collaboration between individuals in order for them to share meaning and uphold the flow of the conversation. Within these types of communication lie a number of language sub-strategies. Quite simply, this could be body language and making gestures in order to aid understanding, but there are many which involve active oral production. These strategies are: paraphrasing by saying the word in another way; transfer which involves influence from the mother tongue; foreignizing which involves making a word from the mother tongue sound English; translation directly from the mother tongue to English; word coinage which involves taking words already known in English to make a new one; approximation where an alternative related word is used, and code switching where the speaker changes language mid-sentence. All of these strategies regardless of error show the learner’s motivation in keeping the conversation in motion. In contrast to this are the following strategies which hamper the flow of speech: message reduction is when the individual says less than they would like to; topic avoidance is when the speaker changes the subject to avoid unknown lexical territory; abandonment is when the speaker gives up in the face of adversity. There is a clear distinction between those strategies adopted which aid communication flow and those which could be regarded as “functionally invasive” and stop the flow (ibid p43-44). The STRIMS project discussed in *I huvudet på en elev* (Malmberg ed. 2000) shows how the majority of pupils already at Year 5 level can hold a conversation with a native speaker and use varying strategies in order to keep the dialogue going. The majority of pupils can produce utterances of ten or more words. However, the language strategy they most often resort to is speaking their mother tongue.

3 Classroom Practice

This chapter will look at ways in which the target language can be exploited in the communicative classroom. Suitable activities will also be discussed in relation to research on language acquisition and will later be used as a basis for my own practical study. It is essential that the communicative criteria of the Curriculum and Syllabus for the school subject of English plus the National Test are presented as they provide the basis for my study.
3.1 Communicative Focus

Giving pupils the opportunity to use the language actively enables them to develop the skills necessary for successful communication. Klippel (1984) discusses how natural dialogues are especially important for learners in a non-English-speaking setting, as they need to experience the language in real communicative situations where they can express their own views and attitudes. Klippel refers to the term “message oriented communication”, originally coined by the researchers Black and Butzkam in 1977. This refers to “those rare and precious moments in foreign language teaching when the target language is actually used as a means of communication” (p3-4), such as classroom discourse. Like Dysthe, Klippel maintains that real communicative situations develop spontaneously, and can be on such a simple level as discussing a new haircut or last night’s TV programmes. Klippel compares this classroom to the traditional one focused on what the language researcher Rivers calls “skill-getting”. This refers to the lesson based on structural exercises and predetermined responses by the learners.

Tornberg (cited in Eriksson & Jacobsson 2001) establishes two types of classroom discourse, the “conversation exercise” or the “conversation”. The first involves language the pupils will need in the future, for example buying a train ticket or inviting someone to a party. In this case, communication becomes the goal of the lesson, and is based on what the language will be used for outside the classroom. The latter involves the here and now, relevant to the classroom and the pupils’ lives, it affects the pupils at that moment. In the latter, the use of English becomes the means of the lesson and could involve talking about weekend plans or asking to borrow a pencil. It could be argued that the pupils need a certain level of language before they can begin to communicate in a real dialogue, but Tornberg argues that this is not the case. She believes that pupils need to communicate actively about what concerns them at that moment in order for them to learn. Ur (1981) discusses how speech needs a purpose of genuine discourse if the conversation is to be kept alive and pupils are to be motivated to participate. She explains how “language is never used […] for its own sake, but always for the sake of achieving an objective; or to perform a function: to persuade, inform, inquire, threaten” etc (p3). Lightbown and Spada (1999) maintain that focus is to be placed on communication rather than on producing correct language, where “meaning is emphasised over form” (p95).
3.2 Communicative Activities

Naturally, communicative activities should help pupils towards achieving autonomy. Thornbury (2005) discusses how in sociocultural terms, autonomy is “the capacity to self-regulate performance as a consequence of gaining control over the skills that were formerly over-regulated” (p90). He explains that as speaking is a cognitive skill, knowledge becomes increasingly automated through successive practice. Therefore, effective practice conditions distract the learner from the need to refer to grammar rules. Appropriation activities are controlled, help the learner integrate the new language knowledge with their existing systems and may put the new phrases into long-term memory. Thornbury (2005) explains how this is achieved initially through drilling, or the “repetitive practice of language items in conditions where the possibility of making mistakes is minimized” (p63): practiced control is slightly freer, where “the possibility of making mistakes is ever-present, but where support is always at hand” (p63). When any degree of autonomy has been reached, the learner can feel a powerful incentive to take further risks in classroom communication which in turn gives them the confidence to interact in an authentic situation. Thornbury (2005) argues that this is achieved in interaction in “real operating conditions”, or those in which the natural spontaneity and unpredictability of communication occur. Suitable exercises could be: “Show and Tell” where the pupil prepares a speech and answers spontaneous questions from the audience; role-play which allows an imaginative element and reflects real life situations; and conversation and chat. According to Thornbury (2005), natural conversation was once criticised by the audiolinguists for having no value if pupils are not of a sufficient level, but is now seen as a tool for language learning. Ur (1981) discusses how one criterion for communicative activities is that they involve interaction and cannot possibly be executed by the individual alone. Additionally, all pupils must be involved if interest and motivation is to be maintained. Pair or group work can maximise participation.

3.3 Curriculum and Syllabus

The communicative aspect of language learning is illustrated in the Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure time centre, Lpo94, (www.skolverket.se). The revised syllabus from 2000 for English states categorically that the lesson should focus on enabling the pupils to develop “all-round communicative competence” of both receptive and productive skills (www3.skolverket.se). With explicit regard to oral communication, the syllabus states that pupils should be able to work both alone and in collaboration with others in order to:
develop their ability to actively take part in discussions […], express their own thoughts in English, as well as understand the views and experiences of others […] develop their ability to use English orally in different contexts in order to relate, describe and explain, as well as give reasons for their views [and] develop their ability to analyse, work with and improve their language in the direction of greater variation and accuracy (www3.skolverket.se)

Also stipulated is that pupils should “develop their ability to reflect over […] their own language learning…” (ibid).

3.3.1 Goals to be Achieved by the End of Year 5

In the syllabus, Year 5 is the first school year with goals set to aid in the evaluation of a pupil in relation to the standard required in the subject. Regarding oral communication, it is stated that pupils should “be able to take part in simple discussions on everyday and familiar subjects [and] be able to orally relate something about themselves and others in a simple form” (www3.skolverket.se).

3.3.2 National Test Requirements

The aforementioned language skill requirements are reflected in the different parts of the National Test set by the Swedish educational board, Skolverket. Taking place in the spring term of Year 5, these tests are intended to give teachers a basis on which pupils’ language level can be evaluated. In Lärarmaterial engelska (Skolverket 2009) it can be read that pupils are tested in their productive and receptive skills through five relatively short diagnostic tests involving the skills of listening, reading, writing and also interactive oral communication in pairs.

In the test of oral communication demanding language production and interaction, pupils converse in pairs for 10-15 minutes. They are to speak as much English as possible, give their own opinion and ask their partner follow-up questions. When necessary, the teacher is advised to aid or to explain in English. This test comprises three stages, namely a warm up, an interview and finally an explanation, with each stage building on the other and increasing in difficulty. The test is centred on subjects relevant to the pupils, for example, family, interests and the home (ibid).

When the teacher evaluates a pupil’s language competence, focus is on whether a native English speaker would understand the words uttered. The teacher is required to evaluate a
pupil’s level of spoken English as a whole. First and foremost their willingness and ability to communicate in the target language is to be appraised, followed by how clearly they express themselves. A number of other criteria must be fulfilled, namely language fluency and spontaneity, language strategies used to overcome communicative problems, and finally range of language used by the individual- this includes command of vocabulary and idioms, grammar correctness, pronunciation and intonation (ibid).

4 Aim
This study will be of a practical nature. The aim is to gain an increased understanding of pupils’ attitudes towards English and their own ability and capability, with a focus on oral communication. I also want to investigate if the systematic practice of communicative activities created in accordance with modern research, the syllabus requirements for Year 5 and the construction of the National Test can result in changed attitudes in the pupils. In order to achieve these aims, the following questions will be posed:

- How do pupils evaluate their language ability and how is this reflected in their classroom performance?
- In what ways can pupils’ attitudes towards speaking English be influenced through systematic communicative practice?
- Is it possible in a 3-week period to positively influence pupils’ oral communicative competence and activity by a programme designed to emulate the criteria of the Curriculum, Syllabus and National Test?

5 Method
This study followed a triangulation method as described by Trost (2005). This involved using more than one method to investigate an area. I chose a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Repstad (1999), a triangulation method ensures a more reliable basis on which to glean information and draw conclusions. Although my main interest was pupils’ attitudes towards learning of and use of the English language, I followed Repstad’s (1999) view that in qualitative surveys it is impossible to avoid giving quantitative numbers. My study comprised three methods for collecting empiric material, namely a class questionnaire, class logbook writing and finally my own classroom observations. I already knew the pupil group chosen for the study. As Repstad (1999) argues, this was problematic as it made it easier to judge based on past classroom behaviour rather than give an impartial
description of what was witnessed. Therefore it was essential that I drew my conclusions based on the results collected by the method triangulation.

5.1 Questionnaire

Pupils completed two quantitative questionnaires, a method chosen in accordance with Repstad’s (1999) view that this was the most suitable way to establish the general opinion and background of the class. The questionnaire was written and answered in Swedish to enable maximum participation. Following the advice of Johansson and Svedner (2001), I based my questionnaire on one already published. My questionnaire was based on that cited in *Engelska i årskurs 5: resultat från insamlingen inom den nationella utvärderingen av grundskolan* (Balke 1990). Naturally, the questions were modified to suit my purposes. The short questions were written in a clear language and only one question at a time was posed in order to avoid misunderstanding. The four-page pre-study questionnaire (see appendix 2) was divided into two sections intended to prompt pupils to reflect over their attitudes towards English both in their free time and in the lesson. Section one, entitled “You and Your English”, asked pupils questions about their attitudes towards English in general, how they come into contact with English in their free time and how they feel they would cope in a situation with a native speaker of English. Section two, entitled “You and English in School”, asked pupils more specifically about their attitudes towards English in the classroom. Here, pupils were asked to state which of the four competences they feel was easiest/most difficult, how active they were in speaking in the lesson, and how confident they believed they would be in communicating in English on a number of different subjects relevant to them. I followed the advice of Johansson and Svedner (2001), and made the process of answering and analysing as effective as possible with the majority of questions requiring that pupils ring in the most appropriate of 4-5 fixed alternatives. A shorter, post-study evaluation in the form of a questionnaire (see appendix 3) was completed at the end of the period. Pupils were asked to evaluate their communicative activity and the project as a whole.

5.1.2 Logbook

The logbook method was chosen because according to Repstad (1999) it is not static like the questionnaire, which enabled the adaptation of questions to suit the purpose. This method was chosen as an alternative to the structured interview method (Johansson & Svedner 2001) in order to gain a qualitative perspective as it allowed all pupils to participate and reflect over
their own language acquisition. Questions were posed and answered in Swedish in order to ensure maximum participation and reliability.

5.1.3 Classroom Observation
The method of classroom observation was adopted in accordance with Repstad’s (1999) view that it enabled me as observer to gain a direct insight into the social interaction and processes of the group. The role of active observer was chosen as it allowed me to join in conversations in order to gain a direct impression of language activity. It also meant that the pupils would not notice anything different from the regular lesson. I could focus on the activity and atmosphere as a whole and note which pupils were active in the exercises. Following the advice of Johansson and Svedner (2001) the observation focused on general occurrences in the classroom as opposed to minute details. The negative result of this was that I was not able to watch the class as a whole or notice the small details.

5.2 Participants
This study involved a Year 5 class of 25 pupils, 11 boys and 14 girls. One boy was exempt so 24 pupils partook of the study. Predictably, there were absences during the study period, but 20-22 pupils were present for each activity. The pupil group was largely homogenous, with only three pupils having a first language other than Swedish. The group had had English as part of their curriculum since Year 1 with the following distribution of minutes per week: Year 1 (25 minutes); Year 2 (45 minutes); Year 3 (55 minutes); Year 4 (110 minutes). The timetabled 55 minute English lesson for the relevant academic year took place on Tuesday and Wednesday from 08.30-09.25. This pupil group was chosen because I had worked with them for one term prior to my study, meaning that a good rapport and relaxed learning environment had been established. Additionally, this pupil group had a high level of attendance, meaning that the study was guaranteed a sufficient amount of participants despite any predictable absences due to illness etc. At the time of the study, pupils had not taken the National Test. The guidelines for carrying out ethical studies were strictly adhered to according to the document “Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning” located on Vetenskapsrådets webpage (www.vr.se). Therefore, all participants and guardians were given a clear description of my study, written permission for participation was essential, participant anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.
5.3 Procedure
Pre-study preparations were carried out in accordance with the guidelines for ethical studies as cited by Johansson & Svedner (2001). The first step was to inform and gain approval from the head of the school, form tutor and the class through informal meetings. The second step involved a formal letter of explanation and consent to pupils’ guardians (see appendix 1) distributed three weeks in advance in order to ensure maximum return in time for the start of the study. My contact details were given in the event of any points being unclear.

For a month prior to the commencement of the study pupils had gradually been exposed to a more communicative methodology in the lesson. This involved shorter, communicative activities carried out in pairs which encouraged them to become more independent of the teacher. The intention was that at the start of the study, pupils would feel comfortable with working with different partners in pupil-focused communicative activities.

5.3.1 Questionnaire and Evaluation
The questionnaire was distributed to and completed by pupils in lesson one of the study. This ensured maximum return according to Johansson and Svedner (2001). It also gave me the opportunity to clarify any points. It took approximately 30 minutes to complete. 22 of 24 pupils were present. The post-study evaluation was distributed and completed at the end of the period. It took approximately 5 minutes to complete. 22 of 24 pupils were present. Although pupil anonymity was guaranteed, pupils were initially asked to write their name on the questionnaire. This was necessary to enable the comparison of these answers with the logbook writing. Questionnaires were decoded post-study to ensure anonymity and were grouped according to pupil answers to question 10 in section 2. This established 3 groups of pupils who in spoken English communication felt they would cope normally, with difficulty or ease. Evaluations were also decoded post-study in accordance with the questionnaires.

5.3.2 Logbook
The logbooks were stored in the classroom and distributed at the end of each activity in lesson 1-5. This ensured that they were available when necessary. Questions were designed to prompt pupils to reflect over their spoken communicative performance. The questions were posed and answered in Swedish to ensure reliability, and were as follows:

1) What did you think of the activity?
2) Was it easy/difficult? Why?
3) Did you speak English? How much?
4) Did you speak Swedish, and if so, why? How much?
5) Are you satisfied with how you worked?
6) Did you make yourself clear? What did you do if you did not know the word? (added for lesson 5).

In the final lesson, due to time restrictions, the pupils completed the post-study evaluation instead of the logbook. At the end of the study, logbooks were decoded in accordance with the questionnaires and evaluations to ensure anonymity. Time restrictions meant that I was unable to analyse all logbooks. Therefore, I randomly selected one pupil from each category of level of communicative ability as established through the pre-study questionnaire. It was essential that the logbooks chosen belonged to pupils who had been present in each activity in order for their progress to be traced from start to finish of the study. The logbooks of these pupils were analysed in relation to attitude towards English, communicative activity in the lesson and whether their attitudes had changed as a result of the study. The answers of these three pupils in connection to the class questionnaires and my own observations gave a basis for my discussion.

5.3.3 Classroom observation
During each activity I moved about freely in the classroom, interacted with pupils, aided when required, coaxed anyone who spoke Swedish to return to the target language and observed pupil activity. I looked for the following criteria:

- What was the general atmosphere of the classroom?
- What was the level of communicative activity?
- How active were the usually more passive/active pupils?
- How much target language/Swedish was spoken?
- What language strategies were used?

During and after each lesson I made pencil notes in my notebook regarding my observations. My observation skills became more efficient as the study progressed.
5.4 The study

The three-week study period involved the regular 55 minute, twice a week scheduled lessons, totalling 330 minutes used for both communicative and administrative activities. Each lesson had a communicative focus centred on authentic subjects relevant to the pupils such as family, home and hobbies or on language necessary for classroom discourse. Lessons promoted different aspects of oral communicative competence, adhering to the requirements of the Syllabus and Curriculum regarding Year 5 and the National Test. Pupils were encouraged to interact with their peers often independently of the teacher and integrating both receptive and productive skills. The questionnaire, evaluation and logbook encouraged pupils to reflect over their own language learning and classroom performance.

I based my choices of activity on the recommendations of Thornbury (2005) and Eriksson and Jacobsson (2001). Activities were undertaken in a whole class group, pairs or small groups. Lessons were closed entities, meaning that activities were finished in the lesson and not continued in the next. This was because inevitable pupil absence would involve time-consuming explanations of activities in progress and inconsistent pupil evaluations of activities. The time frame was through necessity postponed one week from the original date due to insufficient return of consent forms. The overall plan for the study (see appendix 4) was as follows:

Lesson 1: Questionnaire; Find Someone Who (whole class interaction and practice of “Do you have/eat/like?” etc to elicit authentic answers)
Lesson 2: Describing words (group work in practice of language strategies to describe words)
Lesson 3: Disappearing dialogue (drilling activity of useful polite phrases in whole class and controlled practice in pairs)
Lesson 4: Role-play (group work in slightly controlled practice of classroom language in an authentic situation)
Lesson 5: Peer interview (pair work to interview a friend to gain authentic personal information)
Lesson 6: Show and Tell (individual spoken presentation and spontaneous class questions); post-study questionnaire
5.5 Documentation
All pupils present in lesson one completed the questionnaire. Relevant questions were chosen as a basis for analysis of pupil attitudes towards and activity in English and are presented in my results. The post-study evaluation was treated likewise. At the end of each activity, pupils completed their logbooks. Twelve pupils were present in all six activities; these logbooks gave an overall view of the project from start to finish and were grouped in accordance with the three groups of communicative abilities. This made groups according to whether pupils believed they would cope with communicative situations normally, with difficulty or ease. From each of these groups, one pupil was randomly selected whose progress was followed throughout the period. I as observer made notes in and after every lesson.

6 Results and Analysis
In this chapter results of the method triangulation will be presented in chronological order. Results will be analysed continuously and in connection to the relevant section.

6.1 Pre-study Questionnaire
The results of each of the two sections will be presented and analysed. Pupil answers provided a basis on which to focus my practical study. Due to space restrictions of this essay, suitable questions were chosen in order to maximise the clarity and focus of this section.

6.1.1 You and Your English
22 questionnaires were completed. Questions 1, 3 and 8 were deemed relevant for analysis:
Question 1: *What do you think about the English language?*
The majority answered that it was a fun subject (15), fun sometimes (2), or the adapted answer that it was difficult but fun (2). A minority answered that it was difficult (3) but no one expressed that it was boring.

Question 3 and 8: *Can you speak to someone now and how do you feel you would cope in speaking to a native speaker of English?*
All pupils felt that they could communicate to some degree in English, either that they could speak to someone (17) or that they knew some phrases (5). The majority of pupils felt that with a native speaker they could communicate either well (5) or quite well (13), the remainder stated that they would cope badly (4).
Answers to this section showed that pupils had an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards English and that there were inevitable differences in how pupils evaluated their own abilities. However, the fact that the majority of pupils felt that they could already communicate in the target language to some degree reflected the point discussed by Tornberg (1997) that in Year 5 pupils know enough English for it to be established as the classroom language.

6.1.2 You and English in School

Questions 1-7 and 10 were analysed. With one incomplete questionnaire, 21 questionnaires were chosen for analysis:

Questions 1-3 showed general attitudes towards the content of the English lesson.

What do you think about English in school and what is easiest/most difficult about learning the language?

The majority felt that it was at the right level (13), or difficult sometimes (5), the minority answered that it was easy (2) or quite easy (1). Skills were ranked in the following order of easiness: speaking (8); listening (7); writing (4) and reading (2). Skills were ranked in the following order of difficulty: writing (11); speaking (6); reading (3) and listening (1).

Questions 4-7 focused on communicative activity and pupil participation.

Question 4 and 5: How often and when do you speak during the lesson?

The majority felt that they spoke once or a few times (9); quite often (8); or often (3). Only one felt that they never spoke. Just over half spoke when they wanted (12). The second half spoke only when they knew the answer to a question (6) or when the teacher asked them something (3).

Question 6-7: How happy are you with how often you speak in the lesson and how do you feel about speaking English in the lesson?

This showed that the majority were happy (9), quite happy (6) or very happy (4) with their oral participation and only two were unhappy. Just over half felt that it was fun (6) or very good fun to speak (6) whilst the remainder felt unsure (9).

Question 10: Which of the following topics can you talk about or describe?

The abilities were estimated as follows on the next page:
Interestingly, whilst speaking was polled as the easiest of all the four skills by 38% of the class, it was at the same time ranked by 28% of the class as the most difficult skill to be learnt, with only the skill of writing gaining more votes. The fact that one pupil stated that he/she did not participate at all in speaking in class and approximately half the class only spoke when asked a question or when they felt totally sure of their answer could prove Eriksson and Jacobsson’s (2001) theory that pupils are often not given the opportunity to speak. Despite this, all but two of the pupils expressed content with their level of communicative activity, which could show that pupils with less participation in communicative activities were generally happy to let others speak in whole class discussions. For these pupils, it was essential that a safe classroom environment was established if they were to feel comfortable with speaking in the planned communicative activities, in accordance with the dialogical classroom as discussed by Dysthe (1996). Pupils who believed they would cope badly in speaking to a native speaker were also the ones who answered that they only knew some phrases. For these pupils the controlled practice and drilling discussed by Thornbury (2005) would maximise output and help boost their self-confidence. Pupils’ lack of confidence regarding the topics of a foreign country school, and yesterday’s events showed the need for these to be given some focus in future lessons.

6.2 Logbook
Generally, it can be concluded from the logbooks that pupils were overwhelmingly positive towards the activities chosen. This could be a reflection of the theory presented by Ur (1981)
that pupil motivation is related to how involved they are allowed to become in the activity. Activities were naturally chosen with a view to include all pupils by being of a suitable language level. For the sake of this study the logbooks of three randomly selected pupils were chosen to represent the class. Pupil A represents the group that felt they cope with ease in a communicative situation, pupil B represents the group that felt they cope normally and pupil C to the group that felt they cope with difficulty. Here follows a brief summary of the pupils’ answers in the questionnaire:

Pupil A has a positive attitude towards English, enjoys it in school and feels that she can communicate in English with a native speaker. Despite speaking quite often in the lesson and when she wants, A says that this is the most difficult of the four sub-skills. She is happy with her speaking in class but would like to be even better.

Pupil B regards English as fun to know at times and feels she knows some phrases for communication with a native speaker. B does not rank speaking as either the easiest or most difficult of the skills. She describes it as fun and she believes that she speaks when she wants although this is mainly when the teacher asks a question. She is happy with her speaking in class.

Pupil C describes English as a difficult subject sometimes in school but knows a few phrases for communication with a native speaker. He ranks speaking as the most difficult of the four skills, speaks once or a few times in the lesson, and only when he knows the answer. He feels insecure about speaking and is not at all happy with his speaking in class.

Lesson 1: “Find someone who”
All three pupils described the activity as enjoyable and as they were able to participate using the target language they were happy with their performance. For A there were no language problems. She wrote “I already knew all the words” but she also admitted to speaking Swedish one time when asking a friend a question. B found the activity a little problematic and admitted to speaking Swedish when she did not know the word in English. C found the activity to be a suitable level, he spoke a lot and he did not speak Swedish.
Lesson 2: Describing words
This activity was met by different responses from the pupils although they all enjoyed it. A described the activity as easy because the words described were of the right level. She spoke only English. Pupil B was unhappy with her performance as she needed a lot of help due to the fact she was unsure of the words to be described. She evaluated her performance in a negative light and stated that as she was “bad at describing in English” she spoke a lot of Swedish. Pupil C found the activity of the right level, he spoke English all the time and was happy with his performance.

Lesson 3: Class conversation
All pupils were happy with their performance. Although pupil A did not find the activity overly enjoyable she also stated that she spoke more English than she usually did. She spoke one word of Swedish when she did not know the English word for “linne” but that she had now learnt the word “vest-top”. B described the activity as enjoyable, and it was a mixture of easy and difficult. She spoke a mix of Swedish and English as she could not express herself fully in English. C said that he found the activity acceptable. Like B, he found it “both easy and difficult as some of the words were difficult” and he could not fully express himself in English. Although he understood the questions, he could not always answer in English.

Disappearing dialogue:
All pupils were happy with their performance. Both A and B described the activity as fun, it started out as easy but then became more difficult as they had to remember more and more of the dialogue. A was “super happy” with her performance as she spoke only English. B spoke Swedish when she had forgotten a word in English. C did not find the activity enjoyable. He described it as easy but also difficult to remember the words. Despite this he felt that he spoke English.

Lesson 4: Role play
All pupils described this as a fun and easy activity in which they could participate. In preparing the role play both A and B stated how they spoke Swedish to their peers, for example, B wrote “When I was going to help someone, I said it in Swedish and the others translated it into English”. A described this as the most enjoyable of all the activities thus far. She said she spoke English all the time while performing the play. B found the idea of the
activity easy but that it was difficult for her group to decide on a dialogue. She was unhappy with her group’s final performance. C found the activity easy as he quickly learnt his lines.

Lesson 5: Peer interview
This activity was met with the most negative response, due to the fact that the pupils felt that they already knew the answers of their partner. They all answered that they spoke a lot of the target language. Both A and B described the activity as easy although there were a few words that they did not know. A spoke English all the time except for one sentence. In this case she asked the teacher the question “How do you spell ‘hemkunskap’?.” B also spoke Swedish when she did not know a word. In this case she asked the teacher in Swedish “Hur säger man spaghetti carbonara?” C admits that he did speak Swedish but that he mostly tried to ask in English if he was unsure about a word.

Lesson 6: “Show and Tell”
This activity was not evaluated in the logbook. However, in the post-study questionnaire, A named this activity as being the one where she produced the most spoken language. B and C did not rank it.

Results show that the freer the activity, the more the pupils enjoyed it and believed that they learnt. This is in accordance with the view of the dialogical classroom discussed by Dysthe (1996) where real and relevant learning takes place when lessons are pupil focused and allow an element of spontaneity. Pupils were clearly able to reflect over their language performance in accordance with the requirements of Lpo94.

6.3 Observation
My observations were documented in relation to the criteria looked for in each activity.

- Classroom atmosphere:
The three-week study period was characterised by a great deal of oral interaction and laughter and the environment was relaxed but productive. Pupils were so engaged in the activities that lesson time was not sufficient: lessons 1-5 needed an additional 15 minutes in order for activities and documentation to be completed. It gave me as teacher an opportunity to get to know the pupils on a more personal level as well as breaking down barriers between pupils who were more used to working alone or with a friend. Initially, there was some reluctance to work with peers that were not regarded as good friends, but by the end of the period, pupils
automatically started to collaborate with their set partner/s for the task. Pupils did not express the need to return to the textbook. Being an active observer I participated in all activities.

Of the utmost importance during the study was that no member was forced to speak if they felt uncomfortable doing so. In the case of a pupil not knowing a word or phrase, their peers demonstrated that they were able to help in a natural and non-superior way. Pupils clearly enjoyed the variation of activities and group/pair constellations. There were two activities that were met by more enthusiasm than others, namely the role play and “Show and Tell”. Even though “Show and Tell” required preparation for homework, all pupils were prepared on time. The interest of the pupils was evident in the fact that they were able to sit and listen to the presentations of their peers for the duration of the lesson, applaud and ask relevant questions thereafter. Pupils were clearly proud of speaking the target language for what they regarded as a considerable amount of time. Otherwise, pupils enjoyed the movement of “Find Someone Who”, they laughed at the drilling of the disappearing dialogue and were eager to reproduce the dialogue for the class after the controlled practice, they were generally willing to talk about their half term holiday in the class discussion, and they enjoyed getting to know a classmate in the peer interview. This showed that variation of activities was the key to success.

One activity caused a degree of frustration, namely the descriptions of words on cards. Although the more fluent pupils enjoyed this activity, it proved to be too difficult for the pupils of a lower language level. However, when in need of help, pupils did not hesitate to ask me or their peers for help. This activity was the hardest to monitor as help was needed in all parts of the room and it also proved to exclude some of the pupils like B, as they needed a great deal of support. Although the group enjoyed the element of competition involved, this also caused some minor disputes amongst one of the teams, as the girls felt that the boys favoured their friends in distributing points.

-Communicative activity:
All but two activities maximised oral communicative activity from the class. However, even the controlled practice activities proved to be a challenge for pupils like B and C who clearly had some difficulty in relying on their memory and cognitive skills to produce the target language. Their speech was stunted and lacked an element of spontaneity. For the more competent pupils like A, this kind of activity was enjoyable but also created an opportunity
for Swedish to be spoken as they were able to memorise phrases quickly. The controlled practice of “Find Someone Who” resulted in a great deal of communicative activity when it came to asking the questions. However, answers were mostly monosyllabic with either “yes” or “no” and only one of the more fluent pupils asked follow-up questions in English. When gaining the attention of classmates, pupils like B and C spoke Swedish although they asked and answered the target questions in English. This activity showed that pupils tackled the task in English but that most aspects outside of this framework were executed in their mother tongue. Also predictable were the results of the class dialogue. Although I ensured that all pupils answered at least one question, the generally more active pupils like A raised their hands in order to answer questions with greater frequency than others. They were able to give lengthy responses to questions and to help their peers when they experienced difficulties. Pupils like B and C answered only one question each. Pupil C raised his hand voluntarily once, whilst B only answered when asked a question. Pupils B and C understood the set questions but their answers were monosyllabic. As this activity only allowed one pupil at a time to answer, some of the more passive pupils easily became distracted. One pupil doodled in her notebook and two started to whisper about other subjects.

As previously discussed, the activity with the descriptions of words on cards did not elicit the target language from all pupils as it required too much spontaneity and vocabulary for some. Whilst the freer activity of the role play resulted in a great deal of activity, preparations were executed in Swedish, although my questions were mostly answered in English. As the goal of the activity was for all pupils to participate in the role play, I did not wish to exclude anyone by stipulating that preparations be executed in the target language. Despite its popularity, this activity was also deemed to not produce much spoken target language apart from the 2-3 minute group presentation at the end. Here, the amount of target language spoken by each pupil was in direct correlation with the amount of language they usually spoke in lessons, with the most active speaking the most.

“Show and Tell” provided the biggest surprise, as out of the 21 pupils who were present on this day, 16 read from a pre-prepared speech which also included the more confident pupils like A. This made their speech stilted and removed any aspect of spontaneity. It also made it difficult for me to evaluate their language ability as in some cases it was unclear if the pupil had been given help from a parent. Pupil B had likely received help at home, as she was unsure of some of the vocabulary and pronunciation. Four of these pupils, including one of
the generally more active pupils, did not speak for the stipulated amount of time. Interesting to note was that of the five pupils that spoke freely, none belonged to the group that believed they could cope with ease in a communicative situation. In contrast, one of these pupils commendably belonged to the group that belonged to the category that had difficulty in English. She had notes but spoke freely and with confidence, although her language was faltering. In the spontaneous asking of questions after the speeches, the class posed their questions in English. In all but two cases the questions were automatically answered in English. Surprisingly, A was one of the pupils who initially answered in Swedish, although she then translated into English. The more confident the pupil, the more details they gave in their answers.

-Target language:
During this period, I spoke English throughout, even when pupils posed questions in Swedish. Instructions were initially given in English, and where relevant, examples were elicited from the class before the activity commenced. In order for all pupils to be able to participate in the activities regardless of language level, one pupil each time was asked to translate the instructions into Swedish. As the study progressed, this was less and less necessary as pupils became used to the method of working. In the case of the activity with the descriptions of words, I had to translate individual words into Swedish in order to help pupils like B who did not understand the target word. When I elicited the target language for the disappearing dialogue, I also had to use Swedish so the pupils knew what language was requested.

Pupils spoke the target language throughout, mainly because the language required was generally of the right level. The main goal was for the pupils to speak English according to their own level, and not necessarily to learn more vocabulary. The activity that produced the most new language was the class discussion, as pupils needed words to describe their experiences.

-Language strategies:
The most common strategy to occur was translation into Swedish, which was more likely to be demonstrated by the less confident pupils like B and C. In “Find Someone Who”, these pupils were most likely to gain the attention of their peers by calling to them in Swedish, and in two cases even asking the target question in Swedish until encouraged to do otherwise. In this same activity, A admitted to speaking Swedish, although it was in order to help a less
confident peer. Pupil B in the freer activities answered questions only after she first checked her comprehension by translating into Swedish. In freer speech, pupils from all three categories were likely to place filler words and phrases like “alltså” in their sentences. The more confident pupils like A were otherwise more likely to code switch. One such example was during the whole class discussion when A said “I bought a linne”. When she was given the word “vest top” she was immediately able to use it in her own language production. This activity produced the greatest amount of code switching, as pupils mid flow realised they did not know the relevant vocabulary.

Other strategies were witnessed with less frequency. When describing the words on cards, pupils belonging to the groups who cope with communicative situations normally and with ease used body language and gestures. Only one pupil disclosed afterwards that when he was confronted with a more difficult word he thought about it in English. Word coinage appeared in the peer interview and “Show and Tell”. In the peer interview, one of the more confident pupils translated the word “hemkunskap” into “home knowledge” instead of “Home Economics”. In “Show and Tell”, one pupil belonging to the category coping with normality in a communicative situation translated the word “handskar” into “handgloves” instead of “gloves”. One other pupil in this category used foreignising to translate the word “höfte” into “hoves” instead of “hips”. Also in this activity could be witnessed the avoidance strategy by two pupils including C, who stopped their asking of a question when lexical inadequacy became apparent. Pupil C also demonstrated a rather original strategy during the disappearing dialogue, whereby he clandestinely wrote the dialogue on a scrap of paper. As a result, he was unable to reproduce the dialogue when his support system was removed.

Observation results proved the benefits of the dialogical classroom as discussed by Dysthe (1996), whereby pupil participation is encouraged through the establishment of a relaxed atmosphere and where pupils are able to help each other. The freer the activity, the more it was enjoyed by the pupils. However, results showed that in contrast to this, the more controlled the activity the more pupils spoke the target language, which is in accordance with the views of Thornbury (2005). As a result of the observations, it can be concluded that the lower the language level of the pupil, the more Swedish spoken, whilst the more confident pupils are likely to use the language strategy of code-switching in freer communication, which is in accordance with the results of the STRIMS project (Malmberg (ed) 2000). Other language strategies such as word coinage occurred rarely. Results showed that pupils are at
very different stages of the “interlanguage” discussed by Tornberg (1997) and Lightbown and Spada (1999), but that in the majority of cases, pupils use language strategies in order to keep the language flowing as opposed to those which are “functionally invasive”.

6.4 Post-study Evaluation

Question 1-3: How would you evaluate the communicative activities and in what activity did you speak most English/Swedish?

The majority of pupils found the activities easy (11) or just right (7) with a minority that found them quite difficult (4). “Show and Tell” was considered the exercise in which pupils spoke the most English (17). The following activities received one vote each: Find someone who, description of words, disappearing dialogue, class discussion and peer interview. In the activity involving descriptions of words pupils believed they spoke the most Swedish (11), followed by the role play (5), class discussion (3) and peer interview (3).

Question 4-6: How does it feel to speak English now, do you feel the project has helped you to speak English and do you think you will speak more in the lesson now?

Pupils answered that they now felt confident (11) or very confident (10) in speaking, with one pupil feeling unsure. The majority answered “yes” the project had helped them (12) or maybe (8), only two answered that it had not helped. An overwhelmingly positive response of yes (12) and maybe (10) was given regarding if pupils would speak more in lessons.

The answers of pupils A, B and C in the post-study questionnaire were reported as an alternative to the logbook entry:

Pupil A described the activities as easy and that she now felt very confident in her speaking skills. She felt that she spoke the most English in “Show and Tell” and the least in the role play as she spoke Swedish in the preparations. She believed that the project had helped her in her speaking skills and that she would henceforth speak more in the lessons.

Pupil B found the speaking exercises of a suitable level, although she felt unsure of her speaking skills at the end of the project. She felt that she spoke the most English in the disappearing dialogue and the most Swedish in the activity that involved describing the words. Nonetheless, she believed that the project may have helped her speak more English and that she may speak more in lessons as a result.
Pupil C described the activities as quite difficult but that he as a result felt confident in his speaking skills. He believed that he spoke the most English in the activity that involved the descriptions of words and the least in the play. He also believed that the project may have helped in his speaking skills and that he would maybe as a result speak more English in the lesson.

The study could be deemed a success as the results of the class showed that the pupils regarded the activities to be of a reasonable level. This was optimum as it signified that the majority of the pupils could participate as their lexical knowledge was sufficient. The majority stated that the project had had a positive effect on their confidence in speaking and that they would possibly or definitely as a result speak more in class. The two who answered negatively on this matter belonged to the pupil group who felt that they could cope with ease in a communicative situation, so it can be assumed that they already considered themselves to participate actively and without problem. Interesting to note was that “Show and Tell” was considered the activity that allowed the pupils to speak the most English, whilst in reality they spoke more English during the disappearing dialogue. Pupils spoke most Swedish in the description of words and in the preparations for the role play, presumably because many at this stage lack the language base necessary for spontaneous discourse, such as synonyms and strategies.

7 Discussion
For the sake of simplicity, this essay will discuss the findings of the study in the order of the three questions set out in the chapter entitled Aim. These findings will then lead me to draw a conclusion of the study.

How do pupils evaluate their language ability and how is this reflected in their classroom performance?
As can be expected in a class of 25 pupils, the study showed there was a natural spread of levels and attitudes regarding communicative ability in English, although all pupils estimated that even at this early stage they could communicate to some degree in English. An element of worry was added by the pupils who answered that they felt unsure about conversing on the basic subjects centring on themselves and their family. This problem needed to be addressed immediately as communication on these topics is a basic requirement of the syllabus and the
National Test. As a result, I devised the “Find Someone Who” activity and the peer interview. Speaking and listening were ranked as the easiest skills in the subject, which can be assumed is due to the use of English in the media, but it could also be a reflection of the fact that lessons were predominantly held in the target language, thus promoting their active use. This is in accordance with Kraschen’s input hypothesis presented by Lightbown and Spada (1999), whereby pupils subconsciously adopt the language points they are exposed to when the teacher speaks the target language. Writing was ranked as the most difficult skill, which is likely because in Year 5, pupils’ writing skills in their mother tongue are still in the construction phase. Also, spelling in English can prove to be problematic even for a native speaker. In contrast, speaking does not place the same demands on the individual and it allows an element of spontaneity and fun: this was shown in the laughter generated by the pupils’ execution of activities.

Surprisingly, a pupil’s estimated level of ability and competence is not always reflected in the degree of participation in communication. This became apparent in my own observation of the whole class discussion which was dominated by a few confident individuals. As Ur (1981) discusses, activities involving pair- and groupwork resulted in more language output from the class as a whole. This also allowed for Bruner’s “scaffolding” or peer support system to take place which was evident when pupil A aided her classmate in “Find Someone Who”. In the controlled situation of the drilling of a dialogue, all pupils were active, which indicates that participation is more likely from the least confident when there is little room for error. If all class members are to participate, there is a need for the appropriation activities presented by Thornbury (2005). Pupil answers to the pre-study questionnaire showed that all but two were content with their participation in lessons, which indicates that not all members feel comfortable speaking in the class. For these pupils, the establishment of the relaxed and welcoming environment of Dysthe’s (1996) dialogical classroom is essential.

The inconsistency between an individual’s own evaluation of language ability and their own performance became apparent in several ways. One such example was that the confident pupil A and many others read their “Show and Tell” presentation from a pre-prepared manuscript. This illustrates that most pupils do not equate fluency with speaking freely, for them it is just important to speak. In contrast is the pupil who had expressed her language difficulty in pre-study questionnaire but in “Show and Tell” was one of the few who spoke freely with only notes for support. This proved the theory of Dythe (1996) that when lesson content is on a
subject of interest, pupils are motivated to participate to the best of their abilities even when lexical knowledge is lacking. The biggest dilemma was posed by pupil B, who estimated that she would cope normally in a communicative situation with a native speaker. However, in reality she was the pupil who spoke the most Swedish and needed the most support in the activities. At the end of the study, pupil B was the only one who expressed that she was as a result unsure of her speaking ability. This lead me to draw the conclusion that pre-study, B believed that the performance of more fluent pupils was a reflection of her own abilities despite her lack of participation. She became aware of her own lexical inadequacy when she tried to put her spontaneous spoken skills into action. For such pupils, the describing words activity placed too high demands on the speaker as it necessitated a larger vocabulary base and the ability to use language strategies. At this stage, whilst some pupils were able to use the language spontaneously, others needed practice with drawing on their cognitive skills to produce whole sentences. Again, appropriation activities carried out in pairs are essential for such pupils to gain confidence in speaking. Lightbown and Spada (1999), discuss how focus should be on whether meaning is conveyed as opposed to being correctly produced, so it is essential that pupils are aware of this.

In what ways can pupils’ attitudes towards speaking English be influenced through systematic communicative practice?

The class was overwhelmingly positive towards English as a subject and their enthusiasm for the project proved their hunger to improve and use the language productively. The study shows that this enthusiasm can be drawn on by the teacher to create a forum for communication in which even the least prolific and the more cautious can participate. This pupil-focused forum was anchored in the requirements of the syllabus and the National Test regarding relevant topics and pupil interaction. With focus placed on authentic subjects and the dialogical, promoting Klippel’s (1984) genuine discourse and Dysthe’s (1996) authentic questions, pupil interest was gained at the same time as fluency was practiced. The majority of pupils expressed in the post-study questionnaire and in their logbooks that the activities were of a reasonable or an easy level, indicating that maximum participation was well on the way to being achieved. Several pupils pointed out in their logbooks that they felt that the peer interview was not so useful. This was namely because they felt that it was the same as “Find someone who”. However, in reality, they were rather different exercises, as the former was controlled practice and the latter was freer practice. Nevertheless, this highlighted the need for variation in choice of exercise. In hindsight I can see that this could easily have been achieved
for example if the peer interview had been filmed, which would have added a more entertaining dimension.

Although some Swedish was spoken, it was in most cases due to the natural phenomena of interlanguage, as discussed by Tornberg (1997). Most of the interlanguage occurring involved strategies such as code switching and were used to maintain conversation flow. Only in very extreme situations did individuals use strategies such as avoidance which hampered the flow. These results were a direct reflection of those of the STRIMS project (Malmberg (ed) 2000). The effectiveness of Kraschen’s input hypothesis discussed by Lightbown and Spada (1999) was shown in the class discussion, where pupils code switched to cope with lexical inadequacy but who were then immediately able to use the elicited new vocabulary. However, this did not help all pupils such as B who understood the question but who answered in Swedish. For some pupils like B, translation into Swedish provides a sense of safety. Unfortunately, this situation is not desirable as the syllabus and the National Test demand the spontaneous use of the target language, but it can be used in moderation if it helps the minority gain confidence. Another advantage of the input hypothesis is that pupils are exposed to the different sub-skills required for communicative competence presented by Sundell (2001). This became apparent in the disappearing dialogue and the preparations for the role play when the majority of pupils were able to produce the polite phrases that were being elicited. Despite this, the majority of pupils still conversed with each other in similar situations in Swedish. This is presumably and understandably due to the fact that it is unnatural for spontaneous conversation outside of lesson content to occur in English between speakers of the same mother tongue. For pupils at this stage to converse in English, they often need the motivation of it being required by the teacher.

Is it possible in a 3-week period to positively influence pupils’ oral communicative competence and activity by a programme designed to emulate the criteria of the Curriculum, Syllabus and National Test?

Despite the relatively short timeframe of the study, a significant increase in communicative activity and competence was witnessed. This made itself apparent when all class members willingly spoke in front of their peers in the final activity. Past experience has dictated that this is not always the case in such situations. Most notable after the three-week period was that there was an increase in pupils who addressed me in the target language even outside of set classroom activities. Even if not all pupils feel confident in speaking English all the time,
this study proved successful in showing all class members that speaking can be fun, which was reflected in their engaged performance. This is achieved when the lesson actively promotes conversation in the target language on everyday subjects, as discussed by Klippel (1984). At the same time, this reflects the criteria of the Curriculum and Syllabus, which are centred on language use related to subjects relevant to the pupils. The combination of pair and group work in the study came to be established as the norm for conversation exercises, thus encouraging pupils to interact with each other as opposed to relying on a question from the teacher. This paves the way for successful participation in the speaking part of the National Test where the teacher is to allow the majority of talking to occur in interaction between the pupils. The completion of the logbooks allowed pupils to reflect over their own language ability and participation as required by Lpo94.

8 Conclusion
In conclusion, this study has shown me that pupils can gain a heightened interest for participating in classroom discourse as they fulfil the criteria of the Curriculum, Syllabus and National Test. Eliminating the textbook from lessons makes it easier to create pupil-focused lessons with content more relevant to their interests and allows the teacher to get to know the pupils on a more personal level. This does not automatically mean a heavier burden for the teacher, as even the most simple of activity to prepare such as the disappearing dialogue resulted in a fun lesson that allowed maximum participation and relevance to classroom discourse. I have learnt that although the textbook can provide a good base for a lesson to introduce vocabulary, particularly for the less confident pupils, it should be combined with communicative activities that demand an authentic use of the language and allow all class members to participate. It can be concluded that the triangulation method adopted to collect empiric data worked successfully but was time consuming and the class logbook entries were at times lacking details. It may have been more reliable to use the interview method, but time restrictions would have made this difficult to achieve as maximum reliability would have been achieved with interviews after each activity. This study lays the foundation for future research. It would be of the utmost interest to investigate how pupil results in the speaking part of the National Test compare with the results of a similar class who have not worked intensively with oral communication.
Sources


Online sources

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www.vr.se

"Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsandet, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet- Lpo94”
http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1069

"Översättning av grundskolans kursplaner”
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/483/a/1176
Hej!


Underlaget för de övningar jag väljer är de nationella målen som skall ha uppnåtts i slutet av skolår 5, där leven skall:

- kunna delta i enkla samtal om vardagliga och välbekanta ämnen
- kunna i enkel form muntligt berätta något om sig själv och andra

Loggboksskrivningen är även tänkt främja elevernas förmåga att kunna reflektera över hur den egna inlärningen går till enligt Skolverkets betygskriterier.

För att min studie ska kunna genomföras behöver jag målsmans tillstånd. Detta för att allt ska veta att studien genomförs och vad den innebär. Naturligtvis väntar jag på ert samtycke innan jag påbörjar min studie. Talongen ska lämnas senast fredag 31 januari om ni tillåter ert barn att delta.

Tack på förhand,
Med vänliga hälsningar

Nicola Belsey
Tel: 073-567 9582

Jag har läst brevet och tagit del av informationen angående studien i muntlig kommunikation i engelska. Härmed godkänner jag att ………………………………… är med på övningarna och utvärderingarna.

Målsmans namn……………………………………………………………………………………
Appendix 2

Enkät

Mitt namn är ……………………………………………………

Här kommer några frågor om dig och din engelska. Ringa i ett svar. Dina svar kommer att behandlas anonymt. Tack på förhand!

Del 1: Du och din engelska

1) Vad tycker du om det engelska språket?

   tråkigt  ett svårt ämne i skolan  roligt att kunna ibland  ett roligt ämne

2) Kunde du prata engelska innan du började läsa engelska i skolan?

   nej, inget alls  ja, några ord  en del fraser  jag kunde prata med någon

3) Kan du prata med någon på engelska nu?

   nej, inget alls  ja, några ord  en del fraser  jag kan prata med någon

4) Har du varit i något engelsktalande land eller i något land där du var tvungen att prata engelska?

   ja  nej  jag vet inte

5) Om du svarade ja på fråga nummer 4, kan du svara på följande (annars kan du svara på fråga nummer 6):

   Vilket eller vilka engelsktalande länder har du varit i? Hur många gånger har du varit där?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   I vilket annat land har du varit där du var tvungen att prata engelska? Hur många gånger har du varit där?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………
6) Pratar du engelska utanför skolan?
   nej, aldrig  ja, ibland  ja, ofta

7) Om du svarade ja på fråga nummer 6 kan du svara på följande:
   På vilket sätt och hur ofta brukar du prata engelska utanför skolan? Kryssa för det som gäller.

   några gånger per år  en gång i månaden  en gång i veckan  varje dag

   prata med föräldrar
   prata med syskon
   prata med kompisar
   spela upp pjäser
   på semester utomlands
   sjunga
   annat? ..................

8) Hur tror du att du skulle klara dig tillsammans med en grupp människor som bara talar engelska?
   mycket dåligt  dåligt  ganska bra  bra

9) Varför tycker du det är viktigt att kunna prata engelska?

   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

Tack, nu kan du svara på del 2!
Del 2: Du och engelska i skolan

1) Vad tycker du om engelska i skolan?

| svårt | svårt ibland | lagom | ganska lätt | lätt |

2) Vad tycker du är lättast på engelska?

| läsa texter | lyssna (på band/läraren) | prata | skriva egna texter |

3) Vad tycker du är svårast?

| läsa texter | lyssna (på band/läraren) | prata | skriva egna texter |

4) Hur ofta brukar du prata engelska under en vanlig lektion?

| aldrig | en gång/några gånger | ganska ofta | ofta |

5) När brukar du prata engelska under en lektion?

| aldrig | bara när läraren frågar | bara när jag kan svaret | när jag vill |

6) Hur nöjd är du med hur mycket du pratar engelska under lektionen?

| inte alls nöjd | ganska nöjd | nöjd | mycket nöjd |

7) Hur tycker du det känns att prata engelska under lektionen?

| mycket osäkert | osäkert | ganska roligt | roligt | mycket roligt |

8) I vilket sammanhang pratar du mest engelska under lektionen?

| när läraren frågar mig något | i par | i en liten grupp |

9) Vilka övningar gör att du pratar mest engelska?

| mycket osäkert | osäkert | helt ok | säkert | mycket säkert |

| när läraren frågar mig om något ord |

| när läraren frågar om texten |

| egna rollspel |

| beskriver ord/saker i par |

| läsa texten högt i par |

| egna dialoger i par |
10) Vilka av följande saker kan du i dagsläget prata om eller beskriva på engelska?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mycket osäkert</th>
<th>osäkert</th>
<th>det går bra</th>
<th>säkert</th>
<th>mycket säkert</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dig själv</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>din familj</td>
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<tr>
<td>något du gillar</td>
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<tr>
<td>ett fritidsintresse</td>
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<td>skolan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ditt hem</td>
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<tr>
<td>där du bor</td>
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<tr>
<td>det du gjorde igår</td>
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<tr>
<td>en semester</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ett annat land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) Hur skulle lektionen se ut för att få dig att prata mer engelska?

...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................

Tack för dina svar!
Enkät

Ringa in ett svar!

Appendix 3

1) Vad tycker du om de muntliga övningarna vi har gjort?
   - svåra
   - ganska svåra
   - lätta
   - mycket lätta

2) I vilken övning tycker du att du pratade mest engelska?
   - Find someone who
   - Beskrivning av ord på kort
   - Dialogen
   - Diskussionen
   - Pjäsen
   - Intervjun av en kompis
   - Show and Tell

3) I vilken övning tycker du att du pratade mest svenska?
   - Find someone who
   - Beskrivning av ord på kortet
   - Dialogen
   - Diskussionen
   - Pjäsen
   - Intervjun av en kompis
   - Show and Tell

4) Hur tycker du att det känns att prata engelska nu?
   - mycket osäkert
   - osäkert
   - säkert
   - mycket säkert

5) Tror du att projektet har hjälpt dig att prata engelska?
   - nej
   - kanske
   - ja

6) Tror du att du kommer att prata mer engelska nu under lektionen än före projektet?
   - nej
   - kanske
   - ja
Lesson plans

The activities chosen for my study were adapted from those found in literature involving communication in English. Activities were related to the lexical items and topics relevant to the National Test, age of the pupils and language necessary for communication in the classroom.

Lesson 1: Find someone who
This was an appropriation activity, which is a form of repetitive practice of lexical items through practised control (Thornbury 2005 p63). This was a milling activity which involved interaction in the whole class and provided “repetitive practice of formulaic language in a communicative framework” (p66). Pupils were required to complete a paper I had prepared for eliciting information about peers and practising the question “Do you have/do/like etc”. In the activity pupils moved about freely in the classroom and asked each member of the class a question. The idea was that pupils were able to place one class member’s name in answer to each question posed.

Lesson 2: Description of words
This exercise involved interaction in small groups of 4-5 pupils each and is based on that described in Språk för livet (Eriksson and Jacobsson 2001 p59). It required pupils to use language strategies in order to impart meaning. I provided identical sets of cards, each card had a word on it. The words chosen were taken from chapters 1-16 of the textbook used by the class, namely Champion 5 (1995). Cards were placed upside down in the centre of the group. Pupils took it in turns to take a card and describe the word in English to the pupils. The other group members guessed the words. When the word was guessed correctly, a point was given to that person. The element of competition in this activity raised interest and competitive spirit.

Lesson 3:
-Class conversation
This involved interaction between the teacher and the whole class. This involved natural and spontaneous chat (Thornbury 2005 p105). No prior planning was required. The subject was the half-term holiday. I asked pupils to raise their hands in answer to general questions such as “Who enjoyed the snow?” or “Who went to the cinema?” Pupils then told the class in turn what they had done. I asked follow-up questions in order to heighten the element of spontaneity.

-Disappearing dialogue
This is an appropriation activity in the form of drilling, which is “imitating and repeating words, phrases and even whole utterances” (Thornbury 2005 p63). It involved controlled interaction between the teacher and whole class and thereafter pairwork. I first elicited a 10-line dialogue which involved...
useful phrases for classroom such as “Could you open the window please?” and “Yes, or course”. The
dialogue was written on the whiteboard as the language was produced by the pupils. I then drilled the
dialogue. Pupils then worked in pairs. They repeated and practised the dialogue continuously, whilst I
gradually removed words to leave gaps. Pupils then had to use their cognitive skills to remember the
words missing in order to reproduce the correct dialogue from memory (p77). Volunteers then recited
the dialogue for the class.

Lesson 4: Role play
This activity was set up under controlled conditions in the class. I elicited six useful phrases for the
classroom such as “Quiet please” and “Sorry I’m late. I overslept”. These were drilled. Thereafter
these phrases were to be used in a role play in groups of 4-5 pupils based on a classroom situation
involving a teacher, a new pupil and the class. A role play is a freer activity which places the language
in “real operating conditions” (Thornbury 2005 p90). It allows pupils to meet the language in a
situation mirroring that in the real world (p96). Pupils were allowed to plan and prepare their plays
using Swedish, but the play itself was to be only in English and to include the previously drilled
phrases.

Lesson 5: Peer interview
This was a slightly controlled practice version of a natural conversation. The activity was set up under
controlled conditions and was then executed involving interaction in pairs. I elicited useful questions
for gleaning information when meeting a new person. These were written on the board. I then asked
random pupils the questions in order to demonstrate how the exercise was to be undertaken. Then, I
distributed to each pupil a pre-prepared paper with an empty chart to be completed. This required that
the pupil ask their partner for information on certain topics relevant to them. One example was the
topic “family”. Pupils could then ask any question/s in order to complete this point, for example “Do
you have a family?” or “Who is in your family?” At the end of the exercise, pupils were encouraged to
tell the class one interesting fact they had found out about their partner.

Lesson 6: Show and Tell
This required that the pupils for homework prepared a 1-minute talk on an object that was important to
them in some way. They were also to bring the object to show the class when they did their
presentation. This made the lesson completely pupil-focused. After each presentation, the class was
given the opportunity to ask spontaneous questions to their classmate about the object (Thornbury
p94).