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Attitudes to Assessment
– Teachers’ Attitudes Towards Assessment of English as a Foreign Language

Bedömningsattityder
– Lärarens attityder till bedömning av engelska

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The majority of this text was co-written and two chapters were written separately with comments and feedback from each other. Jesper wrote chapter 2 and Robert wrote chapter 3. Chapters 1, 4 and 5 were written together.
Abstract

This explorative research paper looks at the attitudes and experiences of four EFL teachers towards assessment of English as a foreign language. The study was carried out using qualitative research with semi-structured interviews. The paper discusses factors that impact attitudes towards assessment. Our findings show that assessment is affected by a variety of factors, including colleagues, the head teacher and guiding documents. Furthermore, this paper identifies the need for more teacher education regarding the process of assessment, specifically formative assessment.

Keywords: Formative and summative assessment, Assessment-attitudes, Collegial Assessment, Peer assessment, English as a foreign/second language (EFL), compulsory schools, EFL/ESL teachers.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background, purpose and research question

In 2011 the Swedish curriculum was revised and a new grading system was introduced. In light of the curriculum having been revised and research indicating the need for formative assessment in L2 teaching, it is important to investigate the attitudes of L2 teachers towards assessment as “attitude towards the behaviour is a primary determinant that influences teachers’ intentions to implement science reform recommendations” (Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2009). Furthermore, “[e]ducators and researchers agree that teachers play a key role in making educational reforms successful; as a result, teacher professional development is a major focus of systemic reform initiatives” (Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2009, p. 2).

The purpose of our study is to gain an understanding of how some EFL teachers experience working with different forms of assessment and to investigate their attitudes in relation to these experiences. As aspiring teachers of English this insight is helpful to our own future assessment of EFL learners. Even though this research area is highlighted as an important field, we have found little research on the topic of attitudes towards assessment, especially at compulsory school level in a Swedish context. Therefore we feel that this study is relevant in a local school setting especially at a compulsory level.

To investigate the attitudes towards assessment of L2 teachers we posed the following question:

- What are some ESL teachers’ experiences of and attitudes towards formative assessment in relation to summative assessment?

The research was qualitative and comprised semi-structured interviews (Johansson, 2006) involving four teachers at compulsory level. Our interview guidelines were constructed using three categories and open-ended questions. The research gives an insight into some teachers’ attitudes towards L2 assessment and the assessment process in general. We expect that the result of our research provides insights to us, fellow students and practicing teachers concerning the role of formative assessment in language education.
2. Theoretical context

As a consequence of the new curriculum, assessment strategies need to change. Technological advances, and the influences of society are important factors to consider, but teachers’ attitudes and their willingness to implement new strategies are the most crucial factors for successful educational reform (Dori & Herscovitz, 2005; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Rhoton & Stiles, 2002; van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001).

2.1 Assessment changes

Educational reform is an on-going process and follows along with current research. Large revisions of the educational system have been implemented in the last years and:

During 2010-2012 the National Agency For Education was given the assignment by the government to implement a large revision of the curriculum, new syllabi and knowledge requirements within the compulsory school and similar school forms, the reformed upper secondary school and the adult upper secondary level, the new grading system, changes in pre-school curriculum and also the new school law. (The National Agency for Education, 2010-02-15, p. 2)

Assessment has gone through a process of change and it rose to particular prominence in the 1990s when it became necessary to distinguish new techniques of assessment (Cunningham, 1998). An alternative to conventional assessment was suggested and many researchers used the term authentic assessment (Ibid., p. 120). Authentic assessment refers to the ideal of having the assessment functioning as close to reality as possible and it is used with the intention of providing students and parents with information on the on-going learning process (Lundahl, 2012, p. 485). Assessment research has had a significant change to its core values and Lindström (Lindström, 2005) has summarised these shifts in the research as follows:
A shift from... towards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A shift from...</th>
<th>towards:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment is used primarily to check what students have learned</td>
<td>Assessment is also used to diagnose and further teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and teaching are kept separate</td>
<td>Assessment for teaching is on-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher assesses the students on his/her own</td>
<td>Teacher and students assess the progress and decide on further actions together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheoretical assessment</td>
<td>Assessment based on theories as how to acquire a certain knowledge area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of knowledge and abilities</td>
<td>Assessment of understanding and abilities; in the form of critical thinking, creativity, communication and problem-solving in real situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on products</td>
<td>Focus on processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on correct answers</td>
<td>Emphasis on useful questions and learning from experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm-related assessment</td>
<td>Goal and knowledge-based assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results declared in points</td>
<td>Shows strengths and weaknesses, acknowledges progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students work on their own without any aids</td>
<td>Students give each other feedback and can use different forms of support and tools and also use aids in the form of notes and dictionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly written tests</td>
<td>Documentation in varied forms such as logs, portfolios, exhibitions etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Lindström, 2005, p.12, our translation)

### 2.2 Formative and summative assessment

Assessment is a way of documenting students’ language abilities in relation to communicated goals, while evaluation is a way of describing and analysing the knowledge, attitudes or experiences in relation to these goals (Lundahl, 2012, p. 484). To evaluate assessment and to ensure the quality of it, the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment has formulated a set of guidelines (2006) based on the following questions:
1. Assessment Purpose(s) and specification

1. What is the purpose of the assessment?
2. How does the assessment purpose relate to the curriculum?
3. Are there any test specifications?
4. How well is the curriculum covered?
5. How are the assessment purposes and specifications made known and discussed?

2. Assessment Procedures

1. Who designs the assessment procedures?
2. How appropriate are the assessment procedures to the learners?
3. How is information on students’ learning collected?
4. How is information on students’ learning assessed and stored?
5. What efforts are made to ensure that the assessment results are accurate and fair?
6. What efforts are made to promote agreement in marking practices across teachers and schools?
7. What account is taken of students’ views on the assessment procedures?

3. Consequences

1. What use is made of the results?
2. What action(s) will be taken to improve learning?
3. What kind of feedback do students get?
4. What processes are in place for students or their guardians to make complaints or seek re-assessments?
5. What are the consequences of the assessment procedures for classroom practices?
6. What are the consequences of the results of the assessment for learners?

(Department of Education and Special Education, 2006, pp. 2-3)

As the guidelines show, assessment is used for different purposes. Assessment of learning, also known as summative assessment, requires some form of grading or ranking of students’ abilities or achievements related to goals (Douglas, 2010, p. 72). Assessment for learning, also known as formative assessment, is about what teachers and students can do to document their students’ learning so that they can use this information to further their learning process. Gardner (2006) defines it as: “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there” (Gardner, 2006, p. 2). Another definition by The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) is as follows:

... an ongoing process of gathering information on the extent of learning, on strengths and weaknesses, which the teacher can feed back into their course planning and the actual feedback they give learners. Formative assessment is
often used in a very broad sense so as to include non-quantifiable information from questionnaires and consultations. (CEFR, 2001, p. 186)

This requires tangible examples, and Gardner (2006) suggests ten points of assessment for learning where the assessment
1) is part of effective planning
2) focuses on how students learn
3) is central to classroom practice
4) is a key professional skill
5) is sensitive and constructive
6) fosters motivation
7) promotes understanding of goals and criteria
8) helps learners know how to improve
9) develops the capacity for self assessment
10) recognises all educational achievement
(p. 3)

Even though there has been a shift in the research of assessment, formative and summative assessment should not be considered completely different types of assessment with different methods. Instead they should complement one another and used in different phases of the learning and teaching process (Skolverket, 2011, p. 17). Black (2003) offers an alternative way of looking at the different purposes of assessment where summative assessment may be used occasionally to chart student progress. Such an approach may be given a formative focus if the results are used to point forwards to what learners need to do to develop their knowledge, understanding or skills. This presupposes that the learners feel part of the assessment rather than being the victim of it (Black, Harrison, & Lee, 2003, p. 56).

2.3 Implementation of formative assessment

Formative assessment needs to be implemented, and the process includes reasoning between learners and the teacher on how the knowledge requirements are to be met and where the learners’ strength and weaknesses are. When working with formative assessment it is important that the learners receive on-going feedback to further their abilities (Lundahl, 2012).
At a classroom level, Black suggests four stages of practical implementation of formative assessment (Black et al., 2003). The first suggestion concerns the questioning of learners. According to Black, the teacher:

… is no longer seeking terms and descriptions but rather trying to explore students’ understanding. He creates opportunities for the students to exchange ideas, articulate their thoughts and to fashion answers in a supportive environment. Wait time is greatly extended and this encourages more students to participate and think of answers. The students’ answers are longer and contain indications of their conceptual understanding rather than of their knowledge of names and terms. (Black et al., 2003, p. 39)

Furthermore Black suggests changes that entail feedback by marking. This concerns students’ written work and suggests that tasks need to encourage students to develop and understand what they have learnt. Comments for improvement should give students opportunities to be part of the whole learning process (Black et al., 2003, p. 49).

Dan Douglas (2010) suggests that formative assessment should be provided to the learners in the form of feedback with points on weaknesses and strengths in the text and how to improve it. For learners to feel part of the learning process self-assessment should be used, and Black et al. (2003) also emphasize that “students should be taught the habits and skills of collaboration in peer-assessment, both because these are of intrinsic value and because peer-assessment can help develop the objectivity required for effective self-assessment” (Black et al., 2003, p. 52). To promote learner autonomy and help learners guide their own work, learning criteria must be made available to the students beforehand (Black et al., 2003, p. 52-53). In addition, assessment for learning requires that the learners are informed about the knowledge requirements (Lundahl, 2012, p. 487).

### 2.4 Attitudes and Experiences

The word *attitude* has an ambiguous meaning in everyday speech. In research, the word has often been defined as “any kind of behaviour that is regarded as unusual or unacceptable” (Reid, 2011, p. 3). Attitude encompasses several aspects of behaviour and although it cannot be observed directly, the study of it is still important. Another definition was suggested by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) who stated that “Attitude is a psychological tendency that is
expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour” (pp. 1-2). According to Reid (Reid 2011), this definition is now widely recognized (p. 5). Consequently, Eagly and Chaiken’s definition is the one we have chosen to use in our degree project.

Ogan-Bekiroglu (2009) closely examined teachers’ attitudes, specifically those of pre-service teachers, towards assessment and the difficulties that surround the implementation of educational reforms. Two factors related to assessment were examined: difficulties connected to assessment and teachers’ ability to assess efficiently. Ogan-Bekiroglu concluded that teachers’ definitions of assessment tend to focus on “the determination of the level of student learning” (p. 33). Furthermore he argued that students are assessed periodically with methods that are compatible with the teachers’ own teaching methods. Other factors valued by teachers were non-academic factors such as student participation. Furthermore, the teachers interviewed stated that their own knowledge affected their own implementation of assessment. Ogan-Bekiroglu also concluded that external difficulties had negative effects on the teachers’ willingness to change their assessment practices. Most notably this concerned the impact of national tests and the time it took to prepare learners for them. Other perceived external difficulties stated by the informants “were limited time for the whole curriculum, crowded classrooms, students’ unfamiliarity with alternative assessments and school facilities” (Ibid., p. 34). In conclusion, Ogan-Bekiroglu found that “constructivist epistemology, reform movements, curriculum change, requirements of educational system, students’ views, and teachers’ knowledge and attitudes need to be taken into account if assessment is an issue” (Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2009, p. 3).

In another study related to the introduction of formative assessment, (Davison, 2004) conducted group interviews with teachers from Hong Kong and Australia. Not only did the result show individual differences. Davison also found that difficulties transcended the two countries involved. Regional variation aside, school culture and individual interpretations of curricula were key factors in explaining the changes taking place. Davison concluded that there is an urgent need to provide more opportunities for teachers to have dialogues with colleagues concerning assessment issues. Teachers need time and space as well as clear assessment criteria to help them develop a common understanding of the assessment process. Davison also stressed the need for teachers to reflect on their “often implicit constructs and interpretations” (p. 328) of the assessment process.

The recent educational reforms in many countries have received attention by researchers, and many articles survey teachers’ attitudes in relation to these reforms. Connolly et al.
(Connolly, Klenowski, & Wyatt-Smith, 2012) found that assessment beliefs and attitudes have an impact on teachers’ practices and affect whether consistency can be achieved. They also identified a number of factors that impacted teachers’ assessment, such as “the teachers’ notions of quality, their professional experience and understanding, syllabus use, their own assessment beliefs, attitudes and practices” (p. 612). Furthermore, they found that teachers rely on their personal knowledge of the students, the curriculum and the teaching context. In sum, they found that there “is a lack of alignment between the introduction of a new curriculum (ELs) and assessment format and procedures” (Ibid, p. 612).

Davison also explored the topic of assessment (2006) and investigated approaches for setting “realistic goals, professional development and institutional change” (p. 454). He found that

[teacher attitudes and efforts varied dramatically depending on the level of collaboration, with distinct stages, from survival self-concerns, where teachers struggled to adapt to routines and were reluctant to change, to a gradual awareness of the impact of collaboration on students, to a readiness to respond to feedback on teaching. (p. 472)]

Our literature review found tendencies that the attitude towards assessment is varied depending on factors such as educational context and regional variations. The lack of teacher education, information on new curricula and guidance to new assessment procedures are issues raised by researchers. Concerns about learners being assessed periodically and external factors affecting teacher’s assessment procedures, such as time and preparation for the National test, were all important descriptions in the research reviewed.
3. Methodology

To comprehend educational activities, both formal and informal, it is important to reflect, adapt or even reconstruct cultural practices (Freebody, 2003). Educational activities are in themselves affected by societal and cultural changes whilst these activities in turn affect and reshape society and culture. A way of documenting these changes over time is to explore how different members of a culture make sense of what is important, for example teachers within an educational context. One way of documenting this is through interviews (Freebody, 2003, p. 132). Since we are interested in the attitudes and experiences of a selection of teachers, our research uses a qualitative approach for the basis of a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). According to Patton, qualitative research “… is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what might happen in the future” (cited in Merriam, 2009, p.14).

Our research used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions to let the informants talk about their attitudes towards assessment. We interviewed four ESL teachers in compulsory schools in Malmö to get an idea of how their attitudes towards assessment relate to research and the curriculum, specifically on formative and summative assessment.

Our interview methodology is based on Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) who offer a critical stance towards a number of factors concerning the interviewing process. According to Gilbert and Mulkay, the usual sequence of events when conducting an interview is:

1) the interview questions are prepared, based on theories prevalent in the area under study;
2) the participants are interviewed;
3) the analyst looks for broad similarities among their answers to pre-prepared questions;
4) these answers are taken at face value, and the ‘common’ or frequent answers are located and gathered;
5) these ‘common’ are taken to be accurate, partly because of their prevalence; and
6) the analyst constructs generalized, idealized versions of these participants’ accounts, and presents these versions as the conclusions yielded be the analysis.

(cited in Freebody, 2003, pp. 134-135)

However, Gilbert and Mulkay raised concerns regarding this procedure, particularly
concerning how interviews were conducted and interpreted. According to Freebody (2003),

[t]hey concluded that the accounts that people produce in interview settings are not literal
descriptions of independent social realities, nor are they simply neutral outcomes of
standard, ‘normal’ interpretive procedures to do with questioning and answering. Rather,
they characterized interview accounts as means by which participants make available to
us and to one another versions of the state of their belief as it is appropriate to the specific
interpretive occasions in which they find themselves. (Ibid, p. 136)

This is also in line with Patton (1985) and Merriam’s summary of qualitative research
according to which qualitative research is not an attempt to predict the future but rather
understand the uniqueness of situations and the interactions taking place in them (Merriam,
2009, p. 14). Our goal was not to arrive at any absolute truth or claim that any aspect was
more important than any others. Instead we intended to gain understanding of how our
interviewees related to questions on assessment. By focusing on our interviewees and offering
a rich background of information to the context of our informants and by letting their voices
be presented in our findings, we take advantage of the descriptive nature of the investigation
(Merriam, 2009).

The idea that open-ended interviews generate an authentic description of interviewees, has
been questioned by researchers such as Atkinson and Silverman (Atkinson & Silverman,
1997, p. 322) who view interviews as a data generating method rather than a data gathering
method. Nonetheless, if used properly, interviews and specifically open-ended interviews may
offer insights into the social worlds of the individuals interviewed:

1. Interviewing is best understood as an interactional event in which members of a culture draw
   on and rebuild their shared cultural knowledge, including their knowledge about how
   members-of-certain-kinds routinely speak in such settings.
2. Questions are a central part of the data and are best viewed not as neutral or uninterested
   invitations to speak; rather, they shape the grounds or the footings on which the participants
   can and should speak.
   Interview responses need to be treated as accounts rather than as straight reports; we can
   understand interviews as events in which all parties (interviewer/s and interviewee/s) work to
give accounts of themselves and the topics of talk. (cited in Freebody, 2003, p. 137)
3.1 Interviews

A dimension of our enquiries concerns formative and summative assessment. The assessment of students should be both summative and formative. Dan Douglas (2010) suggests that formative assessment should be provided to learners in the form of feedback pointing to weaknesses and strengths as well as ways to improve. Summative assessment is often based on results and expressed in forms of grades (Douglas, 2010, p. 72).

The semi-structured interviews were guided by questions such as “tell me about the way in which you assess your students?” This type of question gave the informants the possibility to tell us about difficulties and the limitations of assessment.

Another guiding question relates to in what ways the teachers discuss assessment with their students. Dan Douglas (2010) suggests that this should be an intricate part of education to ensure that the students are well aware of how far in the process of L2 development they are. This relates to “[t]he process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there” (Gardner, 2006, p. 2). By identifying our informants’ awareness of this process and their attitudes towards it, we investigate their beliefs and attitudes towards assessment.

3.2 Limitations

When selecting informants it is useful to remember that any kind of selection should use a purposeful sampling strategy. According to Hatch (2002), a homogenous sample group is made up of participants “who share common characteristics and these selection strategies are useful for studying small subgroups in depths”. When studying these subgroups this sampling is used to find central themes that have common characteristics that are shared by the informants (Hatch, 2002, p. 50). In the case of our research the group is made up of EFL teachers at compulsory schools. One should at all cost avoid convenience sampling while considering the feasibility of the study.

Planning and conducting the interviews proved to be more of a logistical problem than we had anticipated. By deciding to conduct our interviews during the summer holidays we gave ourselves a disadvantage to start with since teachers on leave tend to be difficult to pin down,
both geographically and temporally. Luckily, we have prior work experience and know several teachers working in and around the city of Malmo. We approached four compulsory school teachers who agreed to be interviewed provided they could be anonymous and that we could adapt to their schedule.

3.3 Research ethics

Research ethics have a great influence on the outcome of interviews (Johansson & Svedner 2006). A qualitative interview is conducted without personal assumptions and allows the interviewee to feel confident in the interviewers ability to be impartial.

Research should be conducted with respect and consideration for the participants. Transparency and information should be accessible to the informants and they should have the possibility to end interviews if they start feeling uncomfortable about the questions. Vetenskapsrådet suggests some key principles for research ethics, some of which concern our research:

- The participants should have a fair and comprehensible description of the method and purpose of the study.
- The participants should have the possibility to ask questions about the study and have their questions answered truthfully.
- The participants should be informed that they can reject or interrupt their participation without any negative consequences. The participants should have their anonymity preserved throughout the report.

(cited in Johansson, 2006, p. 29-30, our translation)

Furthermore, researchers always run the risk of contaminating their research, in this case influencing the informants with their own expectations and values (Johansson, 2006, p. 47).

3.4 Procedures

Prior to our interviews we provided our informants with information on the purpose of the study and information on research ethics. We also provided the interview guidelines in order for them to prepare for the interview. Our informants were interviewed on four separate occasions and the interviews were recorded using two different means of audio recording, this
to ensure a degree of backup if one did not work. By digitally recording the interviews we could concentrate fully on our informants and turn to the transcribing and analysing our data on a different occasion.

The interviews followed a fixed set of questions in the interview guidelines (see appendix) and were divided into three parts. We started with the first part that concerned basic background information in order to ease our informants into the more in-depth questions.

The second part of the guidelines focused on school culture and had questions relating to the local school setting and the day-to-day operations at their schools, specifically experiences with assessment.

The last part concerned personal attitudes towards assessment and the relationship between formative and summative assessment. When we had conducted the interviews they were digitally stored and transcribed for future analysis. Two of our interviews were conducted in English and two in Swedish, the latter ones were translated by us and we therefore have added ‘our translation’ after these citations.

3.5 Participants and settings

In order to protect their anonymity, our informants were given the pseudonyms mentioned below.

3.5.1 Beverly Earhart

Beverly Earhart is 41 years old and was born in the U.S. where she lived most of her life. She graduated from high school as a hairdresser and worked a few years in this occupation. Fifteen years ago she relocated with her Swedish husband and their children to Sweden. The first couple of years she was a housewife and took care of the children. She combined this task with working as a part-time English teacher at a private school. In time Mrs Earhart developed a stronger interest in the teaching profession and applied to the teacher education programme at Malmo University. After four and a half years she graduated as a teacher of English at secondary and the upper secondary level with religion as her second subject.

Presently she works as a teacher of English at a compulsory school and has done so for one and a half years. It is worth mentioning that this job is her very first teaching job as a certified English teacher. According to Earhart, she is the only English teacher at the later years at this
particular school. Besides working as a teacher of English she has a few other duties at the school, such as being responsible for the IT platform and other small responsibilities as Earhart puts it.

The school is located in a small region in the southern part of Sweden and it has around three hundred students. According to Earhart most of the students are of Swedish descent and of working class background.

3.5.2 Joy Andersson

Joy Andersson has been a teacher of English as a foreign language and Swedish as her second subject since 2004. She is also a mentor for a teacher trainee and responsible for a class of ninth graders. Joy Andersson left high school after three weeks and then worked for 6 months with her former teacher as a substitute teacher while figuring out what she wanted to do. Eventually she graduated from upper secondary school and continued on to University where she majored in ESL at Malmö University and also took courses at the University of Lund. She has been teaching at the same school since her graduation but did one semester at a neighbouring community school. The school she teaches at is one of the largest schools in the region and has 550 students between the ages of 6–16. The school has 50 teachers; four of whom work in the EFL department at the secondary level. Once a month they have EFL conferences and the teachers discuss different topics. The municipality has approximately 33,000 inhabitants with a majority of people with Swedish background. The students have varied social backgrounds.

3.5.3 Maria Svensson

Maria graduated from Malmö University in 1997 and taught for four and a half years at a school in the city of Malmö. She then travelled to Spain for two semesters before returning to Malmö and taking a teaching position at a local school, which she has held since 2005. At her current school she is responsible for the school library and a project for the Arts. She is also a mentor for a group of ninth graders and responsible for teacher trainees. At her current school there are only two ESL teachers and because of the limited size of the school they seldom have didactic conferences.

The school has children ranging from pre-school to the ninth grade with approximately 25 students in each group. At the secondary level there are 105 students from the region
surrounding the school. The region is social-economically made up of middle class and upper class families.

3.5.4 Freddie Johansson

Freddie is 35 years old and works at a private school in Helsingborg. After he graduated he worked for one year at another school in Landskrona but has since spent all his time teaching at his current location. After completing upper secondary school he immediately applied to University and studied English and Religion within the teaching program. His degree allows him to teach at the upper secondary level but he is currently teaching at the compulsory level.

Freddie also mentors a group of ninth graders and he helps out with different projects within the Arts. The school has 280 students all living in and around Helsingborg and the school employs 25 people. Freddie is the only English teacher at the secondary level at the school and he also serves as a collegial manager, which makes him responsible for a team of teachers. The majority of the students at the school have Swedish as a second language and are derived from varied social backgrounds, through predominantly working class families.
4. Results and analysis

Our findings are presented in this section of our paper along with a brief analysis.

During the process of transcribing the material four major patterns emerged with sections within these themes. We coded them as follows; (1) Formative and summative assessment: Informants’ knowledge and experience of assessment. (2) Factors: factors that influence teachers’ attitudes. (3) Implementation: The teachers’ experiences of implementing formative assessment. (4) Experiences and Attitudes: Personal experiences and attitudes towards assessment.

4.1 Formative and summative assessment

In this section we detail our informants’ attitudes and experiences of formative and summative assessment.

In our discussions with our informants we asked them to give us insights into their understanding of formative and summative assessment. Beverly Earhart gave us her definition:

Formative assessment, I would say is you look at what the student is doing in the classroom, their practice and how they develop and what they need to move ahead to get to the next level and you give them the tools they need. Summative would be all of these things included […] The formative is more of a guide and summative is putting all those little things that they have done together to have like an overview where they’re at. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

A similar description was given by Maria Svensson when we asked her to tell us how she assessed her learners:

I want to believe that I have a balance between summative and formative assessment, but since you give so much feedback during the semester it becomes formative in a way, that
is my own explanation for my self, but this might not be the case. In its entirety it is formative in it's summative way. (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation)

All of our informants, except for Joy Andersson, offered definitions of formative and summative assessment. This included Freddie Johansson whose description was the same as Earhart’s and Svensson’s, with all the key features of assessment, but he mixed up the terminology and called summative assessment formative and vice versa: “Summative in a strict sense is feedback, written or oral, to the student. No number or points what so ever […] Formative is points and grades without any comments or information” (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation).

From our informants’ responses, excluding Joy Andersson, we found that they all have an idea of how to define formative and summative assessment in accordance with definitions by Black (2003) and Gardner (2006). However, it is important to highlight that Earhart, Svensson and Johansson’s responses did not include any details concerning assessment. Their responses refer to definitions of assessment, exemplified by their answers that formative assessment does not include grading and points. None of the informants related their answers to any guiding documents, such as CEFR or the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment, but instead focused their attention on the curriculum as their main guiding document. This will be further investigated later in our study. Notwithstanding, a more informal influential factor towards their understanding of assessment was attributed to discussions among colleagues.

4.2 Influential Factors

All of our informants expressed that the attitudes of colleagues and head teachers were one of the most compelling factors that shape their own personal opinions and attitude towards assessment.

Our informants said that assessment attitudes were shaped by discussions rather than by the use of assessment guidelines that are advocated and promoted by headmasters and should be regarded as valuable tools in order to ensure equal assessment of the learners. When asked about this Beverly Earhart said:
We have a principal who is very up-to-date on things but there is not a lot of time, you have guidelines and yeah they help you a lot. They do send us a lot of things from the National Board of Education that you are supposed to read. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

Furthermore Earhart expressed her attitude towards assessment and discussions with her head teacher:

The general idea from our principal is mostly formative assessment, we have had a lot of assessment seminars and it’s everything that we have learned, it is basically a repeat of Malmö University. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

Earhart described that her particular school uses more of a summative approach towards assessment, with a head teacher advocating the need for formative assessment. According to Earhart, the other teachers still work with summative assessment, something that has worked well for them throughout the years, as she described it: “teachers who have been teaching for several years and do not want to take the time to write formative comments, due to loss of passion maybe […] ‘I once had a teacher tell me I once was passionate like you when I started, then I just got tired’” (Ibid, July 24th 2013). According to Earhart, there is an issue concerning assessment at her school: “The principal says that there is a lot of resistance, you cannot tell me how do my job and such things” (Ibid). This has consequences for collegial assessment, which is non-existent, according to Earhart:

I wouldn’t say that we have a cooperative assessment because some teachers still do chapters and the tests on the chapters. You can get your grade on the chapter basically, which is what the principals are trying to change, that attitude. (Ibid, July 24th 2013)

The major discussion with Earhart, regarding assessment, has to do with the need for collegial assessment. There are issues with how well this has been implemented at her school, as stated by Earhart:

[W]e are not working with a whole lot of teachers yet, we are kind of pushing for that. Some are willing some are a bit more hesitant and some feel they don’t have a whole lot of time to plan with other teacher, they wanna do their own thing. So what I do is I go and
A similar experience regarding discussions about assessment can be found at Maria Svensson’s small private school. She voiced her experience about assessment discussion with her head teacher, saying that she first turns to him for guidance on assessment (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation). Maria Svensson’s school has a clear agenda and emphasises collegial assessment to the extent that they feel it is needed. “When it comes to collegial assessment, I still have those discussions with the other language teachers, especially the standardized national tests. I feel I need support regarding them. This collaboration exists because we felt that there was a need for it” (Ibid, our translation).

An interesting contrast to Maria’s experience came from Joy Andersson when she was asked the same question regarding the involvement of the head teacher in the assessment discussions, Joy Andersson said:

I feel like we have a lot of control over the material that we use, the headmaster wouldn't even bother with it. I don't know if he could say anything about our subject really… [I] don't know if it is unfortunate but I feel that my colleagues are my guidelines not going to my boss to talk about it or the National Board of Education, it is more a discussion with. my colleagues (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013)

In further discussions, Andersson stated that all of her peers and herself look favourably on collegial assessment, but the fact that it has not yet been implemented into their work was also revealed with Andersson saying “that they just never got to it” (Ibid). Joy described one occasion where collegial assessment does occur, during the national tests where the teachers help each other out by reading student essays, but only the essays where they feel uncertain about a particular grade (Ibid).

Freddie Johansson described his current school as going through cycles with different types of assessment: “We do not use guiding principles per se […] other than the curriculum. The school has gone through different stages and earlier it was Bloom’s taxonomy and our teachings were based on this” (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation). Freddie is the only teacher of English in the years between 7 to 9, and this makes collegial assessment difficult but he still consults other language teachers if he feels there is a need for collegial assessment (Ibid, our translation).
Regarding discussions with his head teacher about assessment, his response was: “English has had, throughout the years at our school, good results on the national tests and corresponds well with the grades so there hasn't really been a need to discuss English as a subject that much”. He continued by saying that if the necessity to discuss his assessment on the standardized test should come up, he would turn to the Swedish teacher at his school (Ibid, our translation). When it comes to the national tests, Johansson feels that there is a ‘need’ for collegial assessment and detailed his ideas by saying “[s]ince last year we have regional meetings where we meet after the national tests to analyse the tests where we are uncertain about the grade” (Ibid, our translation).

Johansson also described discussions at his school regarding assessment:

[W]hat we have discussed at out school is a move from summative assessment towards a more formative way of assessing our students and since I haven't used tests or word training it is mostly summative assessments that I do. So we could try to find some middle ground for the sake of the students and to satisfy parents who want traditional feedback. (Ibid, our translation)

The way our informants related their answers to personal assessment experiences with head teachers and colleagues emerged as a major influence in the way in which assessment is viewed and regarded. The attitude towards assessment is formed by discussions at a collegial level at three of the four schools. It might be worth mentioning that even though these discussions occur, they are not an on-going process except in the case of Maria Svensson whose small private school emphasised a need for these types of discussions. In the case of Beverly Earhart, this process is non-existent due to the resistance among her colleagues to changes in the way they assess. These tendencies to resist change have been researched by Black at al. (2003) who describe change as a difficult process that requires personal change. There is a need for teachers to change the way they view assessment and its role in their teaching. This has also been suggested by Ogan-Bekiroglu (2009) who proposed that: “[…] teachers’ knowledge and attitudes need to be taken into account if assessment is an issue” (p. 3).

Connolly (2012) concluded that a major influential factor in teachers’ judgement was identified as the context in which they work. Connolly also suggested that, assessment beliefs and attitudes have an impact on the teachers’ practice and their ideas regarding to what extent consistency can be achieved. All of the interviewees commented on their schools’ agendas to
move from a summative approach to a formative view of assessment. This requires collegial relations and collaboration at the school, but as the literature shows this is not only rare but also difficult to achieve (Davison, 2006).

All of our informants share a positive attitude towards formative assessment, specifically collegial assessment, but all of them feel that they have not yet implemented this to the full extent. Collegial assessment is only used during the national tests and only when the teacher is uncertain about a grade. Joy Andersson and Freddie Johansson sought discussions regarding assessment when they felt that there was a need for it, emphasising the need during the process of assessing the national tests. According to the National Agency of Education, collegial assessment is a way of ensuring reliability. It is argued that reliability increases when different teachers assess the same material and have discussions regarding the students’ abilities (Skolverket, 2011, p. 35). The tendency to only have these discussions during the national tests, and only with tests that they are uncertain of how to grade, suggests that collegial assessment has not been implemented fully. Davison (2006) stated that only a quarter of the teachers surveyed had frequent contact with other teachers to review students’ work. He argued that collegial assessment requires strong incentives and support from the administration (Davison, 2006). The same types of factors affected our informants’ attitudes towards assessment.

4.2.2 Curricula

When we enquired about the teachers’ experiences of working with different types of assessment, the answers were varied. All of the teachers interviewed have worked with both the curricula, LPO94 and LGR11. Joy Andersson mentioned that there were only minor changes in LGR11 concerning English as a subject (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013). Beverly Earhart and Freddie Johansson said:

I have been working with both the old curriculum and the new one and there were minor changes to the knowledge requirements. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

I haven't seen any major changes in the new curriculum, it is still the same production and comprehension and something to do with culture and context where English is used. It is

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1 Reliability: the assessment is consistent, fair and trustworthy (Lundahl, 2012, p. 501).
nothing revolutionary but still the same; listen, read, speak and write, both in the new and the old one. (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation)

Maria Svensson offered a more practical stance towards the changes in the curriculum and in the way assessment has changed for her by mentioning that her work in the beginning of her teaching career was more guided towards handing out points on a test and writing comments to her students once a semester. Now she writes a comment to her students once a week to help the students develop and succeed. When questioned further about her attitude towards her new forms of assessment, she offered her opinion by saying:

I believe that we have made sure that they are using the language in a whole different way than before and this has given the teacher more work yet the students develop a lot more and I have more control over my work when you are constantly forced to back and check and re-check. (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation)

A positive attitude towards formative assessment and the new curriculum was shared by three of our informants, except Freddie Johansson whose attitude and experience will be detailed later in our analysis. Beverly Earhart noticed a change during her brief experience as an English teacher and had a positive attitude towards using formative assessment, arguing that it makes a difference in the students’ learning when they can realize where they are in their progression. She also implied that the change has not been without complications.

And the little time that I have been working I see it changing rapidly towards formative assessment and it’s hard to get everyone on board... I think it is both positive and frustrating because you have the parents who are pushing and you have a principal who are saying you are not supposed to have a letter grade. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

In the discussion of the curricula, the attitudes of our informants were more varied than in the previous discussions. Even though all of the informants have noticed changes taking place, some of the informants did not see any major changes in the curriculum. Beverly Earhart gave her opinion on the matter, saying on the one hand, that in the short time she has been working there has been rapid change towards formative assessment, but on the other hand also noting that there were only small changes in the curriculum.
Johansson argued that the new curriculum only involved minor changes and still focused on the production and comprehension part of EFL, while Maria Svensson was affected by the changes, saying that her workload had increased with the need for constant feedback to her students and their parents. Still, she had a positive attitude and believed that this is beneficial for her students. One finding in this section has to do with all of our informants saying that there has been a shift in assessment practices while not pointing to any major changes in the curriculum. When asked about different policy documents the informants only referred to the curriculum as their major guiding document.

According to Ogan-Bekiroglu (2009), one factor that explains teachers’ difficulties in implementing educational reform concerns how they relate to assessment. Other researchers have mentioned that one of the implications for professional development is the fact that “collaborating teachers may benefit from more action-orientated teacher research with built-in opportunities for critical reflection and discussion of different views and perceptions of the nature of learning and teaching” (Davison, 2006, p. 472).

4.3 Implementation of assessment

The practicality of using formative assessment and relating this information to the parents and the students is a concern highlighted by Svensson, whose small private school has very demanding parents who require weekly feedback. Her attitude was still positive towards using formative assessment and said:

The feedback and the results give you an extra will to develop further. We have very demanding parents and if you write something they will contact you […] The school itself requires more feedback to the parents since it is a private school and the parent have made an active choice to place their children at this particular school. (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation)

The issue of keeping the parents informed of their children’s progression was shared by Beverly Earhart who experienced confusion among the parents when informing them on the progression of their children. She told us about her process of assessment and said:

I kinda try to do in between I try to tell them where they’re at and I don’t give them a
grade either but if they ask me we look at the knowledge requirements and I can see you are here, it is very difficult because they are used to getting grades and so are their parents [...] the parents wanna know a letter grade. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

She experienced this confusion most apparently during parent–teacher meetings when she explained how the teachers work with the new knowledge requirements. They went through different key words but when it came to the knowledge requirements the parents were confused, especially when the new grading scale was introduced (Ibid).

Joy Andersson shared a similar experience. She felt that the students are more aware than their parents as to what they are working with and Andersson said: “sometimes the students have to explain to their parents how the new curriculum is being applied” (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013).

Johansson offered a perspective on the shift from summative assessment towards a formative way of assessing learners and said that in his daily work he tried to find a ‘middle ground’ “… for the sake of the students and to satisfy parents who still want traditional feedback” (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation). Johansson has tried to implement the new curriculum but does not share the same attitude towards the changes as our other informants. He also offered his view on the changes in the curriculum:

The new curriculum is more problematic in the sense that it is hard to distinguish how the abilities are different from each other. The word 'relative' is used throughout and it is hard to understand the distinction between the abilities on a grade level. (Ibid, our translation)

When asked to tell us more about his attitude towards these experiences he pointed to that: “The new curriculum is a bit more unclear than the old one and what are the main differences between a C and an A are not that clear” (Ibid, our translation).

When Earhart shared her final thoughts, stepping out of her role as a teacher, she offered an interesting explanation, commenting on the issue of feedback and the new grading scale:

In the old system they got their grade and now they are not used to seeing a grade, being a parent myself I understand them, because I want to know how my child is doing in English class and what she needs to do. I think you need to write specific things to help the students move forward because they are very secretive in their writing. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)
Our informants are willing to implement formative feedback, but as Andersson, Earhart, Svensson and Johansson mentioned; satisfying students and parents who want traditional feedback is an issue they have to take into consideration. This process may be part of what is holding back the implementation of formative feedback since the teachers to a certain extent have to focus on the product rather than on the process (Lindström, 2005, p. 12), keeping assessment and teaching separate.

The practical construct of using feedback to satisfy the parents, who according our informants have trouble understanding the criteria, might be why some teachers feel the need to resort to traditional forms of feedback. Cunningham (1998) suggested that finished products are easier to assess and that “… a teacher is likely to be more interested in the short story a student has written than the processes used for its composition” (p. 135). Parents and students tend to focus on grades and traditional feedback and in the case of our informants they return to the traditional forms of feedback in order to satisfy both the learner and their parents. Maria’s comment on a heavier workload and writing comments every week could be an indication of what the researchers mentioned as the difficult process of assessing progress rather than the product. Providing information to the students and the parents on the on-going learning process is an ideal of authentic assessment and should based on having the assessment as close to reality as possible. (Lundahl, 2012, p. 485)

4.3.2 Peer assessment

When asked to tell us about how they use assessment in the classroom, peer assessment stood out as a topic of interest. The positive attitude towards formative assessment amongst our informants is reflected in their responses regarding peer assessment. Beverly Earhart uses peer assessment in her classroom but raised concerns, saying that the process takes time:

I do student assessment sometimes but honestly sometimes it’s easy to forget but it takes time, but they do like it to assess themselves. What I do is at the end of a course we do an evaluation to let them see what we worked on and they can circle in on three different levels of what they have done and they can go back and see, no wonder I didn’t do so well on the assignment. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

Joy Andersson had similar thoughts on peer assessment:

We feel that it has been hard to grade how well that works, because we don’t have a good
system for that because if we leave them a blank paper they don't know what to do. If we give them ready questions we feel like we have been forcing them in some way. That's been hard. They need it and like it and are good at it but how to grade peer-assessment that is difficult. Good to use, hard to grade. (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013)

Peer assessment is a requirement at Maria Svensson’s school where the principal demands it to be used at a classroom level, specifically a method called ‘Two Stars and a Wish’. Maria Svensson explained further that this method lets the students say two positive things and make one helpful comment on another student’s work. When asked further about her opinion on the matter, she expressed some reservations:

I’d like to develop using peer assessment more, if you ask your boss and tell him that the workload is really heavy right now, the answer is always “let them assess themselves” and they are able, but in the end you have to have something to grade. So in my opinion it is no time-saver when students are assessing themselves, it is a paradox. (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation)

Discussing the topic further, Svensson added that she found peer assessment useful but not without raising concerns: “…There are huge benefits of using peer assessment and I always think this year I will start using it but I can’t see my workload diminishing at all” (Ibid, our translation).

When Freddie Johansson was asked about his experience of working with peer assessment in the classroom, he focused his attention on the practical side of it and felt that the hardest thing was to create a classroom atmosphere where the students feel calm and stable and where he can do oral exercises or work in smaller groups. Furthermore, he added that it was much easier to work with reading and listening comprehension exercises, rather than oral exercises. He concluded: “… when we have oral exercises I have to expect that there can be chaos behind my back” (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation).

Three of our informants have a positive attitude regarding the use of peer assessment, but they point to complications in its practical use. None of the informants actually use peer assessment, and even though it is a requirement of the head teacher at Maria Svensson’s school she still does not use it.

The tendency of our informants is to view peer assessment as a product, ending up as something that can be graded in a summative way by the teacher. Svensson and Joy
Andersson stated time as the major issue for not having introduced peer assessment, but as the National Agency of Education recommends, peer assessment can help to aid the teacher and be a time saver, as well as being beneficial to the progression of the learner (Skolverket, 2011, pp. 22-26). The reasoning of Andersson and Svensson is still within the ideas of assessment as a product rather than a process. Assessment and teaching are still kept separate which is in contrast with modern ideals of assessment (Lindström, 2005).

Johansson dismissed the idea of peer assessment and chose to focus on what has worked in the past. His statement about “chaos” ensuing when diverging from listening and reading comprehension exercises could be an indication of what researchers have described as a process where both “assessors and assesses can experience initial anxiety about the peer assessment process” (Topping, 2010, p. 67).

Furthermore, from the responses of Andersson and Earhart, we can infer that the concepts of evaluation and peer assessment are intertwined and misconstrued, saying that they have implemented peer assessment when in fact they were referring to the process of evaluation.²

### 4.4 Experiences and Attitudes

Our last topic of discussions concerned the teachers’ personal experiences and attitudes regarding the relationship between formative and summative assessment. Earhart acknowledged that she uses both but she said that she tends to use more formative assessment than summative:

> I would lean towards formative, but I have noticed that I should do more summative. I think the students are used to that, I’m not sure if I should do more summative but they want it more, they wanna know where there at and it becomes a problem. We’ve noticed that you are so cryptic about it when a teacher gives comments and students asked questions like what grade do I have. ‘I didn’t write what grade you have used which you can do better’ but they wanna know where they are at. (Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

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² Evaluation: “is a process of collecting and analysing and interpreting information about teaching and learning in order to make informed decisions that enhance student achievement and the success of educational programs” (Genese, 2001, p. 144).
Earhart expressed problems with implementing new ways of assessing her students. Her problems related to the other teachers’ views of assessment:

I am a mentor for a ninth grade in my job would be a lot easier if they would use formative assessment because you come to the midterms and you see these students who aren’t passing and you try to get some information from the teachers what they need help with and they need to hand in this assignment and they need to re-take this test so my job as a mentor would be a whole lot easier if they would use formative assessment.
(Interview with Earhart, July 24th 2013)

Even though these issues came up, Earhart has implemented formative assessment together with summative assessment in her classroom and her experiences of using it have been good. She noted that it changed her attitude, specifically when using test saying “…that it is not just tests that count, it is what you do in the classroom and you can see the progress […] formative assessment takes time but you can see the difference it makes in their learning because they actually realise where they are at” (Ibid).

Earhart further developed her discussion by explaining her use of formative assessment yet again:

Sometimes I take them aside and give them some comments and they can see for a least that moment where they are at and they realise what they need to do […] I kinda try to do in between. I try to tell them where they’re at and I don’t give them a grade either but if they ask me we look at the knowledge requirements, it is very difficult because they are used to getting grades and so are their parents. (Ibid)

The concern with mixing grades with formative assessment was also something that Freddie Johansson has experienced at his school. The students want traditional feedback with points and grades and related his answers to research “…if you write a comment and also have a grade, the student will only see the grade” (Interview with Johansson, October 2nd 2013, our translation).

Implementing formative assessment has taken different forms at the different schools. Joy Andersson’s school uses a grading portfolio to help facilitate learner awareness, but she feels that this is still in the implementation phase and has not been readily available to the students. She rationalized this by saying “In Swedish and English we have always been writing comments to our students”. But her attitude towards the new system is still positive. In her
opinion, it is both clear to her and her students and after the semester there are no surprises (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013).

Maria Svensson’s school used a similar tool as the portfolio at Andersson’s school, but theirs is digital:

> When it comes to our digital platform, it is good because you have to fill in the different knowledge requirements which forces me to create the test in order to actually test reading capability and listening comprehension and also oral proficiency so all these parts have to be there. I create this test from the matrixes. (Interview with Svensson, July 30th 2013, our translation)

As mentioned earlier, Svensson has had the experience of working with both summative and formative assessment and tries to combine both of them. She has a positive attitude towards working with this digital platform and stated that “I enjoy the squareness of matrices and they get all the parts and I can’t skip any of the parts ... lots of work but I like it” (Ibid, our translation).

Time was an issue for Maria Svensson who commented on her current school by saying that “… sometimes I feel like it would be nice to teach at a small public school where you don’t have to be so progressive, sit in a corner and take it easy, but that is not the case here” (Ibid, our translation). She developed these ideas by sharing her thoughts regarding where assessment is heading in the future:

> I think we have reached a peak of feedback because you cannot do more and new things and I think you sometimes risk losing the student. It is all about IT and digital tools and assessment back and forth. But general health of the students is never talked about and I think this is dangerous to have a headmaster who is all about assessment. (Ibid, our translation)

She was very concerned at this point and also focused her answers on her own personal experience with doubts about her own abilities of assessing her students, saying that a huge obstacle was her own lack of knowledge and only having 100 minutes per week with her students.

The issue of time was also brought up by our other informants. As mentioned earlier, Beverly Earhart described formative assessment as a time-demanding endeavor, but a process that is worth taking for the sake of the students’ progression (Interview with Earhart, July
Joy Andersson pointed to the fact that she has more work to do in the new system, but mentioned that this had more to do with her familiarizing herself with the new guiding documents and less to do with correcting students’ work (Interview with Andersson, July 29th 2013).

There is a willingness on the part of the teachers to combine both forms of assessment as demonstrated by Beverly Earhart who actively tries to combine both forms of assessment in order to ensure the equal assessment of her students. Both Earhart and Svensson have chosen to give a high degree of feedback to their students. Earhart stated that the extra time required is as a concern but she also recognized the advantages of using formative assessment in her teaching, stating that there is more to assessment than simply using tests. She highlighted the persistent problem of wanting to please her students, who expect a traditional method of feedback. However, from her statements it is not clear how she actually combines the two in her teaching. This tendency applies to all of our informants who share similar ideas of how to develop their assessment but as yet have not implemented these ideas. Even though Svensson tries to combine both formative and summative assessment, the focus is still on the summative parts of her assessment such as the digital platform, which is mostly used in a summative way with the added possibility of feedback through small weekly comments. The digital platform has the advantage of showing the progression of the students in a clear way, but as a tool for offering feedback it is limited.

Maria Svensson’s comment on her own inexperience and lack of knowledge regarding formative assessment was mentioned as a hindrance to implement new forms of assessment and is in line with much of the research that advocates further teacher education, especially when introducing new educational practices (Davison, 2004 and Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2009).

All of our informants view formative and summative assessment as complementary, which is in line with directives of the National Agency of Education (Skolverket, 2011). Still our informants continue to rely heavily on summative assessment and persist in using what has been successful in the past, a criticism emphasized by Earhart when commenting on her fellow teachers at her present school. Matters (2006) states that:

> Our energy should primarily go into designing effective assessments…The purposes outlined as formative and summative are both legitimate. Thus, both kinds of assessment can be used to support students in their learning, if they are properly undertaken. (Matters, 2006, p. 26)
5. Conclusion

We set out to investigate the experiences of and attitudes towards formative assessment in relation to summative assessment. Although our study is based on the responses of only four informants, we can still identify some interesting tendencies.

From the results we can clearly see a willingness to implement new forms of assessment and two of our informants have, to a certain extent, adopted new forms of assessment. However, it is evident that formative assessment still remains work in progress and has not yet been used to the same extent as summative assessment.

All of our informants shared the opinion that they try to use more formative ways of assessing their learners, but at the same time they tend to use summative assessment as a back-up for when formative assessment is not used or when it is considered not to be working. This points to the misconception that one form of assessment is more important than the other and only in the cases of Maria and Beverly could we find concrete examples of how they combine the two forms of assessment.

According to Black (2003) “formative assessment is not at the present a strong feature of classroom work” (p. 2). This tendency is present in our informants’ responses. Ogan-Bekirolgu and Davison’s ideas of teacher education could be very useful in order to facilitate the positive attitude towards learning and implementing new forms of assessment.

Our investigation highlighted central issues regarding the attitudes towards different forms of assessment and educational reform and pointed to the significance of individual interpretations of the curriculum and teacher discussions as central to the attitudes of assessment. Here teacher training becomes important because of the factors that influence teachers’ willingness to implement new forms of assessment. Two of our informants’ attitudes towards their colleagues’ ways of assessing have consequences for the level of implementation of new forms of assessment. The tendency to assess on your own without any collegial involvement has been studied previously by Davison (2004), who concluded that teacher attitudes and efforts varied dramatically depending on the level of collaboration.

Even though our research is limited in its size, it still offers an insight and might serve as an inspiration for further research on assessment attitudes. A larger study into the field of assessment attitudes is necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching
community. Such research could include; larger sampling groups, questionnaires and interviews with students in order to triangulate the data.

Any change including educational reform is never without problems. However, teachers would greatly benefit from further education on different forms of assessment. Referring back to our research question, the result of our investigation show that the teachers share a positive attitude to their experiences with new forms of assessment and are willing to move forward if they are given the means and opportunities to do so.
References


Appendices

Interview guidelines

Background

- Age, years teaching, years at present school
- Education
- Second subject and other duties

School Culture

- English department at your school
- Guiding principles at your school regarding assessment
- Cooperative/Collegial assessment
- Standardized testing

Assessment

- Main influences in assessing L2-students
- Ideals concerning assessment principles
- Relationship between testing and assessment
- Relationship between formative and summative assessment
- Guidelines
- Main challenges of assessing L2 development
- Personal history regarding assessment
- Introduction of Lgr11 and Lgy11