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Listening Strategies in the L2 Classroom

Lyssnandestrategier i engelskundervisningen

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This thesis paper is a collaboration between the two of us, and a final chapter in our journey to become teachers. In terms of dividing the work up between us, we have written approximately half of each section. Malin wrote the first draft of chapter two, while Emma wrote the first draft of chapter three. However, to achieve a more in-depth analysis and discussion we chose to write chapters four, five and six in collaboration with each other.

Before proceeding to the next section we would like to express our gratitude towards our supervisor Bo Lundahl for his commitment and guidance throughout this writing process. We would also like to thank the participants in this study which made our investigation possible.

Emma Ivarsson & Malin Palm
Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate how some teachers interpret, teach and assess listening strategies. Our investigation was based on interviews and a questionnaire answered by some year 9 English teachers. Furthermore, the aim was to study whether awareness and teaching of listening strategies are important for teachers in their everyday practice.

The results indicate that the teachers interpret listening strategies as purposes for listening, such as listening for detail or the whole. The teachers do not explicitly teach listening strategies, and they do not assess them. For these teachers the main focus is placed on listening comprehension and not on the listening strategies.

Key concepts: EFL, secondary school, interpretations, teaching, assessment, listening strategies.
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1. Introduction

Swedish students get exposed to spoken English from a variety of sources. Much of it comes from their English teacher, whose voice represents an important source of language input. Students also get language input by for example listening to each other, watching TV and listening to tapes.

Furthermore, according to Vandergrift (2010), listening is the one skill, out of the four foundational language skills, that is the least understood and the hardest to study. Moreover, when listening to a text one could assume that one uses one or more strategies to understand and learn. Since there is a wide selection to choose between, these strategies can vary from person to person. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate how teachers understand listening strategies, furthermore how they teach and assess them. According to our experience, from our teachers placements, we have never seen any actual teaching of these strategies, such as mentioning different types of listening strategies. Instead, we have observed a focus on the teaching and the assessment of students’ listening comprehension. However, when looking at listening strategies in the syllabus of English for year 9 one finds the following extract in the criteria for grade E “To facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language [...] pupils can choose and apply a strategy for listening” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 37). For grade C, or more, this criterion has evolved from “a strategy” to “strategies” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 38). This means that students should be able to choose and apply at least one, or more, listening strategies while listening. However, this could cause difficulties for teachers when assessing their students if, as our experience has shown us, that they do not teach these strategies.

Moreover, an issue regarding interpreting, teaching and assessing listening strategies is that they are not defined in the syllabus, so the teachers are forced to interpret the content of the syllabus in their own way. This could, therefore, cause differences between teachers’ grading.

Furthermore, the syllabus also states, as part of the core content, that students should be given tools to be able to choose and apply “Strategies to understand details and context in spoken language [...] such as adapting listening [...] to the type of communication, contents and purpose” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 35). In conclusion, if, as we have observed, not all teachers teach or assess listening strategies, the question that remains is why this is the case.
1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how some Swedish teachers of English, teaching year 9, interpret, teach and assess listening strategies. This is investigated in connection to the knowledge requirements, based on interviews and a questionnaire. Furthermore, the aim is to study whether awareness and teaching of listening strategies are important to teachers in their everyday practice. Our investigation is based on the following research questions:

1. How do some teachers of English interpret what listening strategies are?
2. To what extent do teachers teach listening strategies, and if so how?
3. To what extent do teachers assess listening strategies, and if so how?
2. Theoretical background

2.1 Listening

As mentioned in the introduction, Vandergrift (2010) states that, listening is the one skill out of the four foundational language skills that is the least understood and the hardest to study. According to Lundahl (2012), listening is a very important part of language acquisition. Humans are not born with the ability to listen actively, so that is something we have to learn in school. To be able to learn, students need to listen, and therefore the students need to learn to listen. This presumes that teachers create several opportunities for the students to practise their active listening. According to Vandergrift (2010), the different processes involved in listening are difficult to access due to the hidden characteristics of the process and the brevity of spoken input.

Moreover, Börjesson (2012) states that listening comprehension is a complex process and that individual conditions differ. However, we as teachers can, in the classroom, focus more on the process than the product. Hopefully, this can help students to become more aware of how to improve their ability to listen and understand. Furthermore, Vandergrift claims that “recent studies have led to some new insights into the underlying cognitive processes, the teaching and the assessment of listening” (p. 160). However, Vandergrift further states that not many theoretical models have appeared, in comparison to the other skills, and that there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding listening.

2.1.1 Cognitive processes

Moreover, Vandergrift (2010) claims that recent research on listening emphasizes bottom-up and top-down processes as two fundamental cognitive processes one needs for comprehension. He further explains the two terms as follows:

Listeners use bottom-up processes when they construct meaning from the incoming sound stream by gradually combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features to build comprehension of an utterance or a text. Listeners use top-
down processes when they use context, prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture and other schema knowledge in long-term memory) and listener expectations to build a conceptual framework in which to slot the individual units of meaning retained from bottom-up processing to eventually arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the message. (Ibid. p. 161)

In other words, bottom-up processes are used when one makes as much use as one can of small parts of information. One starts by listening for separate sounds and then combines the sounds to make syllables and words. Phrases, clauses and sentences are then formed by combining the syllables and words. Then by joining the sentences texts or conversations are formed. Furthermore, top-down processes are, in other words, when one uses one’s knowledge and the situation. You understand what you hear through your knowledge of situations, contexts, texts, conversations, phrases and sentences.

According to Vandergrift (2010), these processes are used simultaneously. However, depending on the task or the purpose for listening, the listener uses the one process more than the other. Vandergrift (2010) claims that research on top-down and bottom-up processes “suggests that listeners need to know how to use both these processes to their advantage, depending on their purpose for listening” (p. 161). Furthermore, Vandergrift (2010) mentions that the speed and effectiveness of the cognitive processes will be affected by the extent to which listeners can efficiently process what they have heard. Without conscious attention to details, a native language listener does this automatically. However, Vandergrift (2010) continues, “listeners learning a new language have limited linguistic knowledge; therefore, less of what they hear can be automatically processed” (p. 161). The comprehension of the listeners, learning a new language, can turn out to be incomplete or breaks down because, depending on their level of proficiency or the text’s level of difficulty, the listeners will need to process the input consciously which can turn out to be difficult due to the restricted working memory.

Moreover, research shows (e.g. Vandergrift, 2010; Field 2008) that metacognitive knowledge can be used to compensate when a skilled listener has not fully comprehended what he or she has heard. To draw a conclusion of what the listener has not understood, he or she can organize pertinent cognitive strategies, contextual cues and other essential information accessible to them. Vandergrift (2010) states that:

When listeners are able to (1) analyse task requirements; (2) activate appropriate listening processes for the task (3) make appropriate predictions (4) monitor their comprehension; (5) problem solve to figure out the meaning of what they do not understand and (6) evaluate the success of their approach, they are using metacognitive knowledge for successful listening comprehension. (Ibid. p. 161)
However, Vandergrift (2010) states that cognitive processing is not the only aspect involved in listening. Affective factors, such as anxiety, can restrain listening which in its turn further restricts the amount of information the working memory can process at one time. Vandergrift (2010) further claims that “other learner variables that affect comprehension include background knowledge of the topic of the text, proficiency level in the target language, age, metacognitive knowledge about listening, strategy use, native language listening ability, working memory capacity and sound discrimination ability” (p. 161).

2.1.2 Different ways and purposes of listening

There are two ways of listening in the classroom, one-way listening and two-way listening (Lundahl, 2012). One-way listening occurs when we are exposed to music or movies, and in a classroom setting one-way listening occurs when the students are listening to the teacher or their fellow students. Lundahl (2012) also states that listening often occurs quite passively. To make listening more effective, so that the students listen actively, the teacher can clarify what is expected of them prior to the listening exercise. Different ways of achieving this, could be to ask them to answer questions, ask questions or to summarise in their own words. Two-way listening most commonly occurs through conversation. Furthermore, Lundahl (2012) states that listening is a central part of conversation and a necessary component for the conversation to work. A rewarding conversation is based upon the participants’ comments, which builds upon the participants’ thoughts during the conversation.

Furthermore, listening could have several different purposes. We as listeners need to know how to distinguish between these purposes. According to Wilson (2008), there are a number of purposes for listening: Listening for gist, listening for detail, listening for inferring meaning, listening to be able to act, listening to be able to take notes and listening to be able to participate in a conversation. These different aspects are just purposes, not strategies for listening.

2.2 Listening strategies

2.2.1 Conscious and unconscious strategy use

When examining previous research, it becomes clear that the definitions of listening strategies
vary a lot, as Ridgway (2000) mentions in his study. He shows this with examples of different definitions from various scholars. Wenden (1987) believes that meaningless definitions almost has nothing to do with language learning, while Oxford and Cohen (1992) assert that there are more specific characterizations, such as conscious and unconscious awareness: “Strategy use involves some degree of conscious awareness on the part of the learner” (p. 9), but the line between unconscious and conscious is not fixed, it varies from individual to individual. This is due to automatization, which means that if you repeat something often enough it will end up in your unconsciousness. This is because it saves the human brain both time and cognitive resources. According to Ridgway (2000), “[i]f they are repeated often enough, operations which once cost us conscious effort are later performed automatically and unconsciously – think, for example, of the effort we made as children puzzling out new words, which we now process automatically (p.179). However, we, as future teachers, should focus on conscious learning, since, as Oxford and Cohen (1992) state, “If strategies are unconsciously and automatically used, then explicit strategy training makes little or no sense” (p. 12).

2.2.2 The syllabus for English

When viewing the syllabus for English year 9, one finds the following words for grade E: “To facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language and texts, pupils can choose and apply a strategy for listening” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 37). Skolverket never clearly defines what is meant by a strategy for listening. Therefore, in order to get a better understanding of what Skolverket means by listening strategies, we contacted their information service. The answer they gave us, was that it lies within the teachers’ profession to be able to interpret and apply the different parts of the syllabus and that there is no one we could contact who could give us a definition of what Skolverket means by listening strategies. However, Skolverket advised us to look in Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska (Skolverket, 2011b) where one can find further explanations for the syllabus for English. For instance, one can find examples of listening strategies, such as when you are standing on a station platform and listening for departure times or when you are trying to interpret if a person is happy or angry. When searching for additional explanations, one can look into Börjesson’s (2012) text on strategies for English, she refers toVandergrift’s seven-step model regarding listening comprehension strategies.
The purpose of the seven-step model is to expand listeners’ awareness of metacognitive strategies, such as planning, controlling and evaluating. Börjesson (2012, p. 8) explains the seven steps as follows:

Larry Vandergrift's sju steg - hörförståelse i klassrummet (något modifierat)
1. Eleverna får använda sin förståelse genom att de först får information om ämnesområdet och till exempel texttyp (så som högtalarmeddelande, nyhetsinslag, instruktion) och därefter får gissa vilka ord som kanske kan förekomma i inslaget och/ eller föreslå vilken typ av information det kan handla om.
2. I ett andra steg får de lyssna och verifiera sina hypoteser och eventuellt anteckna/lägga till ny information.
3. Därefter jämför eleverna i par eller grupper vad de kommit fram till, modifierar efter diskussionen och enas om vad det är de fortfarande inte förstår.
4. Denna diskussion följs av en andra lyssning varvid eleverna återigen kontrollerar vad de förstått och fortfarande eventuellt har svårt att uppfatta.
5. Sedan följer en diskussion med alla eleverna som rekonstruerar de viktigaste punkterna och fyller på med detaljer och reflekterar över vad som gjorde att de förstod eller inte förstod olika delar av “texten” eller enskilda ord.
6. Vid den tredje lyssningen lyssnar eleverna efter om det är ytterligare något som de efter diskussionen kan verifiera och vid denna lyssning kan de eventuellt ha tillgång till en skriven text om sådan finns.
7. Slutligen kan eleverna i en sista fas reflektera över vad som hjälpte dem att förstå och föreslå mål för en följdande individuell eller gemensam hörförståelseaktivitet. (Ibid. p. 8)

As stated in Börjesson’s (2012) text, Vandergrift’s & Goh’s (2009) seven-step model begins by explaining the first step, which is when the students use their understanding when they receive information on the subject area and text type, and then suggest what it could be about. The second step suggests that the students get to listen and verify their hypothesis and possibly add new information. Furthermore, the third step means that the students continue to discuss and compare their results in groups or in pairs. After the discussion they should agree upon what they still do not understand. This discussion is followed up with the fourth step, a second listening, where the students check what they understood and possibly still do not understand. The second listening is followed up by the fifth step, which is another discussion where the students highlight the main aspects and add details. They should also reflect on what it was that made them understand, or did not understand, parts of the text or separate words. The sixth step includes listening a third time. During this listening, the students listen for additional things to verify, and they may then have a written text at hand. Moreover, the final step includes a reflection phase. During this step the students reflect on what helped them understand, and to suggest the goals for individual or collaborative listening comprehension activity. This model includes bottom-up and top-down listening which has previously been mentioned. Furthermore, Börjesson (2012) also mentions that teachers should
not let the students have an early access to their textbooks while listening, instead they should use their cognitive processes which normally appear in real time listening.

2.2.3 Metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies

Börjesson’s (2012) definition of listening strategies is based on Vandergrift’s Metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies which in turn are based on O’Malley’s and Chamot’s (1990) approach to defining language learner strategies, which divides the strategies into three categories:

1. Metacognitive: “planning for, monitoring or evaluating the success of a learning activity”;
2. Cognitive: “operat(ing) directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning”
3. Social-affective: “interacting with another person to assist learning” (Ibid. p. 44)

However, Field (2008) questions whether there is a clear distinction between metacognitive and cognitive strategies. He argues that it is difficult to explain and that the distinction is unclear, it depends on the context. Field (2008) states that “[i]f I plan to listen for stressed words in an utterance, the strategy qualifies as metacognitive; but if I just do it, it becomes cognitive” (p. 204).

Vandergrift (1997) explains the different categories further:

Metacognitive strategies:
- Planning: ‘Developing an awareness of what needs to be done to accomplish a listening task, developing an appropriate action plan and/or appropriate contingency plans to overcome difficulties that may interfere with successful completion of the task’
- Monitoring: ‘Checking, verifying, or correcting one’s comprehension or performance in the course of a listening task’
- Evaluation: ‘Checking the outcomes of one’s listening comprehension against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy’

Cognitive strategies:
- Inferencing: ‘Using information within the text or conversational context to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language items associated with a listening task, to predict outcomes, or to fill in missing information’
- Elaboration: ‘Using prior knowledge from outside the text or conversational context and relating it to knowledge gained from the text or conversation in order to predict outcomes or filling in missing information’
- Summarization: ‘Making a mental or written summary of language and information presented in a listening task’
- Translation: ‘Rendering ideas from one language to another in a relatively verbatim manner’
- Transfer: ‘Using knowledge of one language e.g. cognates) to facilitate listening in
another’
- Repetition: ‘Repeating a chunk of language (a word or phrase) in the course of performing a listening task’

Socioaffective strategies:
- Questioning for clarification: ‘Asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing, or examples, about the language/and or task; posing questions to the self’
- Cooperation: ‘Working together with someone other than an interlocutor to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance’
- Lowering anxiety: ‘Reducing anxiety through the use of mental techniques that make one feel more competent to perform a listening task’
- Self-encouragement: ‘Providing personal motivation through positive self-talk and/or arranging rewards for oneself during a listening activity or upon its completion’
- Taking emotional temperature: ‘Becoming aware of, and getting in touch with one’s emotions while listening, in order to avert negative ones and make the most of positive ones’ (Ibid. p. 39 –295 )

2.2.4 Comprehension-oriented strategies

Lundahl (2012) discusses comprehension-oriented listening strategies, e.g. perceiving if a person is happy or angry, i.e. the tone of voice, or trying to listen for specific information. These strategies could be influenced by a number of different factors. Examples of such factors can be student-related factors, e.g. interest, motivation, gender and age. It can also be context-related factors, i.e. the context in which the students listen to a text; and teaching-related factors, which means what cognitive, linguistic and social demands a task requires from a student. This, in combination with how much support the teacher provides, gives the students the tools to meet those requirements.

Moreover, among these comprehension-oriented listening strategies, Cohen (2010) separates these strategies into three types:

- Before listening to the language: Deciding to pay special attention to specific language aspects, for example, the way the speaker pronounces certain sounds

- When listening in the language: Listening for word and sentence stress to see what natives emphasize when they speak. Practising ‘skim listening’ by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others.

- If some or most of what someone says in the language is not understood: Making educated guesses and inferences about the topic based on what has already been said. Looking to the speaker’s gestures and general body language as a clue to meaning. (Ibid. p. 167–168 )
These three types could also be defined as pre-listening, during listening and post-listening activities; which are in line with, previously mentioned, Vandergrift’s & Goh’s seven-step model (2009).
3. Research methodology

When choosing research methodology Bartlett and Burton (2007) state that one needs to consider the amount of time one invests in each method. Therefore, the research methods we found most suitable in this paper were semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. The intention was to use the questionnaire as a screening method. However, the respondents answers, to both the questionnaire and the interviews, were very similar and we, therefore, decided to only make a brief summary of the results of the questionnaire. The following sections will further explain the reasons why we chose these methods.

3.1 Participants and context

The participants for both the interviews and questionnaire were chosen through convenience sampling, which, according to Dörnyei (2007), means that the “members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility or the willingness to volunteer” (pp. 98–99 ). However, one needs to keep in mind, as Dörnyei (2007) claims, that volunteers may be different from non-volunteers in their aptitude, motivation or some other basic characteristics, and dropouts may also share some common features that will be underrepresented in the sample with their departure (for example, dropouts may be more unmotivated than their peers and therefore their departure might make the remaining participants’ general level of motivation unnaturally high). (p. 101)

In other words, the results may not be representative for all teachers. One cannot know how other people would have answered. They might have changed the outcome of the study. The participants were all year 9 English teachers from eight secondary schools in Malmö. The participants were chosen due to our prior personal relationships and because of their similar student backgrounds. The participants for the interviews were four female teachers aged 41 to 56. Three teachers were interviewed in English. However, the fourth preferred to be interviewed in Swedish. The results from the interview, conducted in Swedish, were later
translated into English. The interviews took place in similar classroom settings at the different secondary schools in Malmö. The reason for this was to make sure that the interviewee would not get distracted, and that the conditions were the same for all participants. The first interview took place the 25\(^\text{th}\) of September, 2013. The interviewee was a 41-year old, female English teacher for year nine, and she has been working as a teacher for 13 years. To anonymise the interviewee she was given the pseudonym Lisa. The second interview took place the 26\(^\text{th}\) of September, 2013. The interviewee was a 56-year old, female English teacher for year nine and she has been working as a teacher for 31 years. She was given the pseudonym Ruth. The third interview took place the 1\(^\text{st}\) of October, 2013. The interviewee was a 54-year old, female English teacher for year nine and she has been working as a teacher for 32 years. We decided to call her Beth. The fourth interview took place the 2\(^\text{nd}\) of October, 2013, at a secondary school in Malmö. The interviewee was a 49-year old, female English teacher for year nine and she has been working as a teacher for 18 years. In our study, she is referred to as Joan.

The participants for the questionnaires were six female teachers and two male teachers, aged 25 to 65, from eight secondary schools in Malmö. They were also given pseudonyms, Q1 to Q8.

3.2 Research ethics

Graziano and Raulin (2010) state that researchers must inform their participants of what the study concerns and protect them from deception. The participants must also know enough about the study to be able to choose if they would like to participate or not. Therefore, the participants were handed a paper, in advance, where they were informed about the purpose of our research. Furthermore, the participants were anonymised, according to Graziano et. al. (2010), the anonymity of informants is a way of protecting their identities. As suggested by Vetenskapsrådet (1990), the participants were informed that they could terminate their participation at any time without any negative consequences.

3.3 Interviews
According to Bartlett and Burton (2007), the way in which an interview is structured can vary between being very formal and highly structured or being more like a conversation and unstructured. The interviews in this paper were semi-structured, which means that if the interview is prepared properly and uses an interview schedule, Bell (2005) claims one “should be able to leave the interview with a set of responses that can be fairly easily recorded, summarised and analysed” (p. 159). Furthermore, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to follow up on answers, which the interviewer cannot prepare for.

Moreover, the reason for choosing interviews as one of the research methods, as Bell (2005) states, is that they are easily adaptable and that interviews therefore allow the interviewer to follow up on questions and create new questions based upon unpredictable answers. In addition to this, Bell (2005) claims that the interviewer can pick up on the way in which a response is made through the tone of voice, the facial expressions and possible hesitations. However, Bell (2005) mentions that one should also be aware of negative aspects with interviewing, which could be that it is time consuming, and furthermore, that it is highly subjective which can cause bias when analysing the responses.

Bell (2005) advises that interviews should be recorded. To save the information of what was said during the interview, and to be able to quote the interviewee, one should record the interviews. We therefore chose to record our interviews. However, Bell (2005) further claims that all interviewees may not want to be recorded and that might inhibit honest responses. We therefore had this in mind and explained who has access to the recordings and that the interviews were anonymised.

The interview (appendix 1), contained six questions, that were based upon our three research questions. They concerned interpreting, teaching and assessment. The first dimension concerned the teachers’ explanation and awareness of listening strategies. Furthermore, the second dimension was connected to if and how the teacher teaches listening strategies and to what extent they found teaching listening strategies to be being important. Finally, the third dimension was based on assessment and the importance of assessing listening strategies. Some examples of the interview questions were:

· What do listening strategies mean to you?
· To what extent do you teach listening strategies, and if so how?
· To what extent do you assess listening strategies, and if so how?
3.4 Questionnaire

As Bell (2005) mentions, interviews can be very time-consuming and with this in mind we decided to use questionnaires as a supplement to the interviews. This meant that we could collect more data in much less time than if we interviewed all the participants. The questionnaires were handed out either in person or via e-mail, to approximately 30 teachers. However, we did not receive any questionnaires that were handed out in person. In total, we only received eight questionnaires that all had been sent out via e-mail.

According to Brown (2009), when writing a questionnaire one can use either open-response or closed-response questions. The difference between the two is that open-response questions allow the participants to express themselves in their own words rather than, in a closed-response, where they select an answer from a limited list. When writing the questions we did not feel that we could predict what the teachers would say. Therefore, since we wanted the teachers to express themselves in their own words, we decided to use open-response questions. Brown (2009) mentions that the positive aspect of open-response questions is that the responses produced can be rather different and often surprising. However, as Brown (2009) states, a downside with open-response questions is that it is generally more time-consuming and difficult to analyse.

The questionnaire (appendix 6), contained nine questions, that were based upon our three research questions. Moreover, the questions were connected to the quotes, regarding listening strategies, in the syllabus for English. They were carefully discussed with our supervisor and edited twice. They concerned interpreting, teaching, awareness and assessment. The first dimension concerned the teachers’ explanation and awareness of listening strategies. Furthermore, the second dimension was connected to if and how the teacher teaches listening strategies and to what extent they found teaching listening strategies being important. The third dimension concerned the teachers and students awareness of listening strategies. Finally, the third dimension was based on assessment and the importance of assessing listening strategies. Some examples of the questionnaire questions were:

· What do listening strategies mean to you?
· To what extent do you teach listening strategies, and if so how?
· To what extent do you think your students are aware of different listening strategies?
· To what extent do you assess listening strategies, and if so how?
4. Results and analysis of the interviews and the questionnaire

This chapter presents the results of the data collection. It is divided into three main parts: teachers' interpretations of listening strategies, the teaching of listening strategies and assessment of listening strategies. In turn, these three main parts were divided into three sections: the interviews, the questionnaire and analysis.

4.1 Teachers' interpretations of listening strategies

4.1.1 The interviews
The majority of the interviewed teachers’ interpretations of listening strategies were similar to each other. They interpreted listening strategies as different ways of listening or listening for different things, such as listening for details or listening for the whole. In addition to this, they mentioned that students need different strategies for different situations, or purposes. According to Joan, listening strategies could serve as ways of giving the students pre-knowledge about a task, so the students know what they are listening for. Another example of an interpretation of listening strategies is Beth’s response. She stated that it depends on the purpose of the text or the program one is listening to. That sometimes one needs strategies to listen for details and sometimes one needs to listen to get an understanding of the whole, for instance the whole situation or the whole information package.

4.1.2 The questionnaire
The majority of the responses to the questionnaire were in line with the interviewees’ answers. Several teachers connected listening strategies to the comprehension of the spoken language. The teachers interpreted listening strategies as strategies which facilitate the learning and understanding spoken language, and as purposes for listening. Q8 (questionnaire 8, 2013), interprets listening strategies as “tactics employed by learners in order to understand what they hear and how they interpret or guess difficult words as well as the meaning of the content presented”. According to Q4, his students do much better on a task if they know the purpose of it.
4.1.3 Analysis

The teachers all thought that listening strategies are different ways of listening and understanding spoken English. Furthermore, the majority thought that there were two different listening strategies: looking for details versus the whole. However, these ways of listening are more in line with Wilson's (2008) idea of the purposes for listening, e.g. listening for gist or detail, than actual listening strategies. Furthermore, as previously stated, Skolverket (2011a) does not have a clear definition of listening strategies, which may cause confusion among teachers. Nevertheless, Skolverket seems to believe that all teachers understand what they mean by listening strategies and it is, according to Skolverket's information service, a teacher's job to be able to interpret and apply the different aspects of the syllabus. However, as stated, the information service does refer one to the kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska (2011b), where one can find further explanations for the syllabus for English. When searching for additional explanations, one can look into Börjesson’s Strategier i engelska och moderna språk (2012). In this text, Lena Börjesson (2012) defines listening strategies by referring to Vandergrift's seven-step model and his definition of metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. Moreover, the interesting part of our question concerning teachers’ understanding of listening strategies was that none of the teachers mentioned the support material, during the interviews, which could mean that the teachers are unaware of such support material.

Several teachers, who participated in the questionnaire, connected listening strategies to the comprehension of spoken English, and that listening strategies are skills which able the students to understand certain details, the whole or a message in the text. These answers are similar to the interviewee’s responses, and in turn, they are also connected to Wilson’s (2008) purposes for listening. However, they are not in line with Börjesson’s (2012) statement that it is more important to focus on the process rather than the product.

4.2 The teaching of listening strategies

4.2.1 The interviews
When asked to what extent and how the teachers teach listening strategies they answered that they do teach listening strategies to some extent, and stated examples of what they do in the classroom. The examples included what to listen for such as details or focus on key words or understanding of the whole. For instance, Beth stated “I talk about it, and give examples so that if they for example are supposed to listen for a detail, like a time or a certain number […] I’ll talk to them about that, now try and focus on the key words, the question or if it’s more of an understanding of a situation like we have on the national tests” (interview 4, 2013).

Furthermore, they claimed that they teach pre-listening activities and keywords such as what, where, when, who and why. Also, they tell their students to underline words or they might show a picture before the listening activity.

Moreover, the interviewees’ answers to the importance of teaching listening strategies did not correspond with each other. Ruth thought listening strategies were not more important than anything else – the most important thing was that students are able to understand texts, not use strategies. Joan agreed that listening strategies were not the most important thing within the English language. Nevertheless, she thought listening strategies could help the students understand more from a text. Furthermore, Beth found it important to teach listening strategies since they are part of formative assessment and help students to develop further and understand that it is useful to have different strategies. Moreover, Lisa thought it is important to teach students what method is best for them.

The majority of the teachers thought that the students were unaware of listening strategies, and that they are not able to choose between them, and/or apply them. According to the majority of the teachers, some of the reasons for the students’ unawareness was that they understand everything the teacher says but they cannot talk or write about it. Further reasons were that they are not aware of their existence, and that the students either can or cannot apply listening strategies and that it is difficult to really know whether they are using them or not.

4.2.2 The questionnaire

The responses to the questionnaires corresponded with the interviewees' answers. The teachers answered that they teach listening strategies to some extent and stated different tactics and techniques that can be used in the classroom. Some of the examples were to ask for clarification and other useful phrases for communication, to summarize, explain and interpret parts of speech to find key elements and practising listening comprehension from old
national tests. Another technique was asking questions, such as where, when, what, who and why before listening to a text. However, Q7 mentioned that he believed that it would be too difficult for students aged 13-15 to be introduced to the concept of listening strategies.

The majority of the respondents found it important for teachers to be aware of listening strategies. Overall, the teachers did not explicitly state any reason to why they believed that it is important to be aware of listening strategies. However, it was stated by one respondent that language learning, partly, depends on listening skills, thereby teachers need to be aware of listening strategies to be able to provide their students with good listening strategies.

The majority of the respondents thought that the students were unaware of listening strategies, and that they are not able to choose between them, and/or apply them. One respondent stated that he was sure that the students had not heard of the concept of listening strategies, but they use these strategies which is obvious since they excel on the listening comprehension part of the national test. However, two teachers thought that the students were aware of these strategies and were able to choose and apply what works best for them.

4.2.3 Analysis

The examples in the previous section, except for pre-listening activities, are not connected to the Skolverket’s text on listening strategies (Börjesson, 2012). Again, the teachers gave examples in line with Wilson's (2008) purposes for listening. This comes as no surprise since the way the teachers defined listening can be connected to Wilson (2008).

Moreover, the interviewees’ answers to the importance of teaching listening strategies did not correspond with each other. One thing the answers had in common were that the teachers compared listening strategies with strategies for reading, writing and speaking, to explain the importance. That meant that the answers were unclear and hard for us to analyse. Some examples of this is that Q2 found teaching listening strategies to be as important as being aware of them, especially when it comes to teaching weaker students; and, Q4 thought it was important, but since his students had more difficulties with reading and conversing, he spent more time teaching those strategies.

However, since listening strategies are a part of the knowledge requirements (Skolverket, 2011a), and the students should be able to choose and apply these, one can assume that teaching listening strategies should be important. If one does not teach listening strategies, students cannot be expected to be able to choose and apply them.
When asked to what extent, and how, the teachers teach listening strategies, the majority of the teachers responded by stating different examples. Some of these examples, such as asking for clarification and summarizing, are part of Vandergrift’s (1997) socio-affective strategies, which are included in his definition of listening strategies. However, the socio-affective strategies are not included in Börjesson’s (2012) explanations of listening strategies. Thereby, it is rather interesting that the teachers mentioned these. Furthermore, the other examples, stated by the teachers, are more associated with Wilson’s (2008) purposes for listening. Moreover, two of the teachers stated that they do not explicitly teach listening strategies. Some reasons for this were that the students are already exposed to a lot of English through TV, and that according to the teacher’s experience, the students have better listening skills than other English skills. This, perhaps, could point to a bit of a misinterpretation of what listening strategies actually are and to the exclusion of any teaching of listening strategies. As previously mentioned, this may create problems when assessing students on their use of listening strategies. A further reason for not teaching listening strategies, as stated by the other teacher, was that, according to him, it would be too difficult for students aged 13–15 to be introduced to the concept of listening strategies and that he already struggles to make them understand what a strategy is. This statement is quite interesting since Skolverket (2012) states that these strategies could help students to become more aware of how to improve their ability to listen and understand. However, if some teachers have students with these difficulties, one could understand that listening strategies might be too complex and abstract for the students to comprehend.

Overall, the teachers believed that it is important for teachers to both be aware of listening strategies and teach them. The majority of the teachers did not give any examples to why this is, however some of them did. One reason stated was that it is important that teachers are aware of them because language learning depends on listening skills and therefore it is very important for teachers to provide their students with good listening strategies. Furthermore, some other reasons were that teachers needed to be able to reach every student and that it was especially important when it came to the weaker students. However, even though most of the teachers believed that it is important to be aware of, and teach listening strategies, one teacher believed that it is quite difficult to work with listening to begin with. Also, another teacher stated that since his students have more difficulties with reading and conversing, he spent more time teaching those strategies. Moreover, one of the teachers stated that future teachers should learn about listening strategies.
The majority of the teachers thought that the students were unaware of listening strategies, and that they are not able to choose between them, and/or apply them. However, since, listening strategies are a part of the knowledge requirements (Skolverket, 2011a), and the students should be able to choose and apply these, one could assume that teaching students to be aware of listening strategies should be important. This because, if one does not teach the students what listening strategies are, they cannot be expected to be able to choose and apply one. This fact is linked to the teachers’ previous answers concerning to what extent do they teach listening strategies. As stated before, most teachers do not teach listening strategies explicitly, and this makes it difficult for the students to define, and to be aware of, listening strategies.

### 4.3 Assessment of listening strategies

#### 4.3.1 The interviews

The interviewed teachers’ answers were similar to one another. They do not assess their students’ use of listening strategies. Instead they assess the students’ comprehension of texts. The teachers believed that it is only the comprehension aspect that can be assessed, not what strategies the students use to get there. This was shown through Ruth’s answer “I want the comprehension of it and hopefully I have given them strategies to reach a good amount of the comprehension” (interview 2, 2013). Therefore, the teachers should focus more on the product, comprehension, than on the process, the students’ use of strategies.

As for the question concerning whether it is important to assess listening strategies, the answers varied. Lisa thought it was important to include strategies in the syllabus, because they support fairly new teachers in their assessment. Moreover, Ruth did not really answer if it is important to assess listening strategies, she just stated, as her final remarks, that she thought it was more important to teach listening strategies than she did before. However, Beth found it very important to make them understand that they have use for strategies in different contexts. She added that the students might not think about strategies if one does not talk about them and therefore she finds it important to do so. Joan did not think it is important to assess what listening strategy a student uses, as long as they understand. According to Joan, the important thing was that the students are able to understand what is said, and know what
to listen for when listening to a text. It does not really matter how the students reach such comprehension.

4.3.2 The questionnaire
However, the teachers who answered the questionnaire found it difficult to assess listening strategies as such. Instead they assessed the finished product, that is comprehension. Nevertheless, one way of assessing listening strategies was to have the students reflect on their own strategies. Moreover, one teacher, Q8, stated that the results or their answers can be assessed and that the paths they choose to get the answers are not so important and should not be assessed. There should thus be more focus on the product than on the process. She continued by stating that it is important to remember that a listening strategy is “a tool or a means to an end, not an end itself”

4.3.3 Analysis
The majority of the respondents did not assess listening strategies. They focused more on the product instead of the process. However, this is the opposite to what Börjesson (2012) recommends teachers to do. The whole idea of listening strategies is to focus on the process rather than the product. Moreover, as stated in the theoretical background, Börjesson (2012) claims that a focus on strategies may help students to become more aware of how to improve their ability to listen and understand. However, in contrast to this ideal, the teachers interviewed assess the students’ ability to understand spoken English, not the strategies they use. One of the respondents answered that she thought it is easier to determine if they have not used strategies than if they have used them. For her, her students have used strategies if they have completed a task successfully.

As for the question concerning whether it is important to assess listening strategies, the answers varied. However, as stated before, since Skolverket (2011a) has included listening strategies in the knowledge requirements one can only assume that assessing listening strategies should be important to teachers. Consequently, if they do not find it important to assess listening strategies, and in turn do not assess them, they do not abide by the policy documents.
The majority of the teachers claimed that they assess listening strategies, however, when taking a closer look at their answers, their examples did not match their claim. Some examples were, assess if they are able to listen for details, or assess the students on the national tests, and assess them when listening to peers. These examples are not connected to Vandergrift’s (1997) metacognitive processes, which Börjesson (2012) mentions, these are more in line with Wilson’s (2008) purposes for listening. However, the rest of the teachers found it difficult to assess listening strategies as such, instead they assessed the finished product i.e. the comprehension. This is not in line with Börjesson’s (2012) explanation, since she states that the process is more important than the product. This aspect will be further developed in the discussion section.

As for whether it is important to assess listening strategies, the respondents did not seem to think it is more important than anything else. The majority did not find it important as such, however, one claim that was made is that it is more important that students can use strategies in comparison to knowing about them. Moreover, it was also important that teachers assess the same things if grading will have a chance of being fair and equal. Furthermore, one of the teachers stated that the strategies are not a reflection of what a child knows or understands. They are a way of achieving understanding. Moreover, teachers need further training in how to assess listening strategies.
5. Discussion and conclusions

We found that none of the teachers mentioned Vandergrift's (1997) three categories of listening strategies: the cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. One can assume that the teachers should have mentioned these strategies, when interpreting what a listening strategy is, since they are referred to in Skolverket's (2011b) support material. Moreover, as stated before, when we contacted Skolverket's information service to get a clearer definition of what Skolverket claims listening strategies to be, it was stated that separate interpretations could not be provided. However, if teachers use different definitions, they will both teach and assess their students differently. This could lead to differences in students’ opportunities for fair assessment. It is only reasonable to suggest that Skolverket should provide a clearer definition that teachers can base their teaching and assessment on.

5.1 Teachers' interpretations of listening strategies

The results showed that none of the teachers mentioned Vandergrift’s (2010) cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies, which Börjesson (2012) has based the explanation of listening strategies on. The majority of the teachers, instead, seem to identify
listening strategies as Wilson’s (2008) purposes of listening. Due to the way in which the policy documents are worded, this interpretation of listening strategies is reasonable. However, one could question which of these explanations is preferable. One would assume that all teachers should follow the syllabus, since they are created for equal education and assessment, throughout the nation. However, for this to be plausible the policy documents’ explanation of listening strategies needs to be further explained or revised, in line with Lundahl’s (2012) comprehension-oriented strategies. The comprehension-oriented strategies focus more on the product, that is the students’ comprehension, rather than the process, such as Vandergrift’s (2010) cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. The comprehension-oriented strategies are in line with the teachers’ statement that they can only assess the students’ comprehension, not what strategies they use. Therefore a suggestion that would benefit both teachers and students could be to revise the syllabus and focus on the comprehension-oriented strategies.

Moreover, the quote from Skolverket is vague and this could lead to several different interpretations. A possible solution could be that Skolverket (2011a) would provide a more tangible explanation, and more detailed guidelines. Another solution could be to include listening strategies in the core content of the syllabus, revised with a more clear explanation, and extract them from the knowledge requirements. Because, listening strategies are useful; however, they are difficult to assess. Nevertheless, if Skolverket decides to let the syllabus remain as it is, further education on listening strategies for language teachers is needed. This is supported by the teachers’ own comments regarding listening strategies.

5.2 The teaching of listening strategies

In general, the results showed that the teachers teach the purposes for listening, such as listening for detail or the whole. However, they do not teach listening strategies, at least not in line with Börjesson’s (2012) explanation. When the teachers discussed how they teach listening strategies they focused on the listening exercises they do with the students and not on the actual teaching of listening strategies. As stated in the analysis section, this, perhaps, could point to a bit of a misinterpretation of what listening strategies are. Which, in turn, could lead to an exclusion of the teaching of listening strategies. One could assume that this
could create problems when assessing their students on their use of listening strategies, which, as previously stated, is a criterion for grade E, in year 9 (Skolverket, 2011a).

Overall, the teachers found it important for teachers to be aware of and teach listening strategies, however, they had a different view of what they are in comparison to Börjesson (2012). This could create problems when assessing the students on their awareness of listening strategies. Moreover, the majority of the teachers thought that the students were unaware of listening strategies, and that they are not able to choose between them, and/or apply them. This fact is linked to the teachers’ previous answers concerning to what extent they teach listening strategies. As stated before, most teachers do not teach listening strategies explicitly, and this makes it difficult for the students to define, and to be aware of listening strategies. Another reason for the students’ unawareness of their use of listening strategies, is perhaps connected to conscious and unconscious awareness (Oxford & Cohen, 1992). According to Ridgway (2000), “(i)f they are repeated often enough, operations which once cost us conscious effort are later performed automatically and unconsciously” (p.179). Thereby, the students might be using one or more strategies while listening: However, this process may have been automatised.

5.3 Assessment of listening strategies

Our findings indicate that the teachers found it difficult to assess what strategies the students use. However, what they did assess was the students’ comprehension. As previously stated, this suggests that the teachers focused more on the product, instead of the process. However, this is the opposite to what Börjesson (2012) recommends teachers to do. The whole idea of listening strategies, according to Börjesson (2012), is to focus on the process rather than the product. Moreover, Börjesson (2012) claims that, we as teachers can, in the classroom, focus more on the process than the product. This can help students to become more aware of how to improve their ability to listen and understand, e.g. Börjesson (2012) quotes the syllabus for English “strategies to understand details and context in spoken language” (Skolverket, 2011a:35). However, our findings indicate that the teachers thought that the students were not aware of what listening strategies are. This could be a consequence of the teachers’ lack of explicitly teaching listening strategies. If the teachers do not teach their students listening strategies then one could assume that the teachers could not assess the students’ use of them.
This corresponds with the teachers’ statement about the fact that they cannot assess what strategies the students use, only the comprehension. Furthermore, one of the teachers stated that the strategies are not a reflection of what a child knows or understands. As stated, she further claimed that the results or the students’ answers can be assessed and that the paths they choose to get the answers are not so important and should not be assessed. Finally, she stated that a listening strategy is “a tool or a means to an end, not the end itself”. Therefore, we do not find listening strategies as a reliable source for assessment/assessing. Instead, as stated in the explanation section, one could include comprehension-oriented strategies which focus more on the product instead of the process.

5.4 General critique and future research

When critically examining our study we would have benefited from an earlier start. Establishing contacts with possible participants earlier on could have led to quicker data collection. This could also have meant that we would have noticed, earlier on, that many of our potential participants were not going to participate. This in turn would have given us the opportunity, at an earlier stage, to further search for other participants. The manner in which we chose to hand out the questionnaires could have been changed due to the fact that it could be easier, for potential participants, not to participate when one only receives an e-mail instead of meeting the researchers in person. Another aspect regarding the participants could be that the results could differ depending on the people participating. It could depend on their background, workplace, number of years within the profession, and the amount of knowledge of Börjesson’s (2012) explanation of listening strategies. As stated, the intention was to use the questionnaire as a screening method. However, the respondents’ answers to both the questionnaire and the interviews were very similar. If we instead had chosen different questions for the different methods we could have collected more data to base our conclusions on. One way of doing this could have been to do the questionnaires first and then follow up with the interviews. Then, possibly, we would not have received similar answers. Another aspect regarding the outcome of the study is that other questions could have given different results. One can also assume that a different method, or methods, could have given other results. A method, which could have been used for our study, is observations in combination
with interviews. Observations could have made it possible for us to observe the teachers, while teaching, and then the observations would be preceded or followed up by an interview. Furthermore, for future research it would be interesting to focus on the students’ understanding and awareness of listening strategies to see if the teachers’ perception of the students’ awareness corresponds with the students’ opinions.

5.5 Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to investigate how some Swedish teachers of English interpret, teach and assess listening strategies. We based our investigation on interviews and a questionnaire answered by year 9 teachers of English. Furthermore, the aim was to study whether awareness and teaching of listening strategies are of importance for teachers in their everyday practice. The results indicated that the teachers do not explicitly teach listening strategies. The results indicated that, overall, the teachers interpret listening strategies in a different manner than Börjesson (2012), they refer to the Wilson’s (2008) purposes of listening. The teachers do not explicitly teach listening strategies and they do not assess them. The focus, for these teachers, was on listening comprehension and not on students’ use of listening strategies.

Our investigation has made us see the need for a revised version of the syllabus, This could help teachers and students to understand and interpret the criteria and the core content for English, in year 9. This would bring about more equal education and assessment, which both teachers and students would benefit from.
References

Primary Sources

First interview conducted 25th of September, 2013, appendix 2
Second interview conducted 26th of September, 2013, appendix 3
Third interview conducted 1st of October, 2013, appendix 4
Fourth interview conducted 2nd of October, 2013, appendix 5
Questionnaire 1 collected 10th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 2 collected 11th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 3 collected 11th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 4 collected 11th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 5 collected 14th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 6 collected 14th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 7 collected 15th of October, 2013
Questionnaire 8 collected 17th of October, 2013

Secondary Sources


Appendix 1

Listening Strategies
- Understanding, Teaching and Assessing

We are two students majoring in English, from Malmö Högskola, named Emma Ivarsson and Malin Palm. This term we are writing our degree paper with the focus on if and how teachers understand, teach and assess listening strategies. The subject area was inspired by the following quotes from the syllabus of English:

“Strategies to understand details and context in spoken language and texts, such as adapting listening [...] to the type of communication, contents and purpose” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 35).

“To facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language and texts, pupils can choose and apply a strategy for listening” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 37).

Your participance in this study is both voluntary and anonymous. Furthermore, you can discontinue your participance at any time. Moreover, all answers will be processed anonymously and the data we collect will only be used in our study. If you have any further questions regarding our study you can reach us at emmaivarsson87@hotmail.com and/or torstensson_malin_69@hotmail.com.

Thank you for participating!

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working as a teacher?

2. What do listening strategies mean to you?

3. To what extent do you teach listening strategies, and if so how?

4. To what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies?

5. To what extent do you assess listening strategies, and if so how?

6. To what extent do you think it is important to assess listening strategies?
Appendix 2

Transcription of interview number one

1: Interviewer nr. 1
2: Interviewee
3: Interviewer nr 2

1: So, our first question is: How long have you been working as a teacher?
2: Yes, so I have been working as a teacher for thirteen years. Here at this school, all the time.
1: Okay, and what do listening strategies mean to you?
2: Listening strategies is a way of getting my students to develop different ways of listening. If, for instance, some of them may very well just be able to focus on what I say when I am standing up here, talking to the whole class. And, in some cases, some of the students actually need me to talk to them directly. Otherwise they won’t understand what I am saying, because they need to focus on me and not me focusing on the whole class. And actually in some cases, some of my students listen better when their friends tell them later on what I’ve just said. I don’t know why that is but I’ve noticed that in some cases some of the students are better to, or are at explaining things in a, I don’t know, younger way.
1: How would you connect that to the syllabus then, that it says that are supposed to be able to facilitate it and use these listening strategies. And it actually says in the syllabus, that for grade E...
2: Grade A?
1: No E.
2: E.
1: Just to be able to pass, they should be able to use listening strategies.
2: Yeah... sorry I completely lost you half way.
1: So let’s see... No, I can’t find it. Har du det?
3: Ja, jag har det.
1: In these ones. So grade E is to facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language and texts...
2: Okay, so the question was?
1: That they can choose and apply a strategy. I was just wondering how you would connect, what listening strategies mean to you, how/what you think they are, how you would define it? What they have for listening strategies, and how they could...
2: So, you mean how well they listen to me, or...
1: No, it’s... it depends on how you define listening strategies, I guess.
3: Exactly!
1: And that’s why we were wondering how you would define it. You see it as what you do to help them.
2: (Sighs)
1: Cause, if you look at.. That’s why I’m asking about the syllabus, because in the syllabus it says that they be able to apply a listening strategy. That they have.
2: Yeah, as I said before I think they do without thinking about it.
1: Mmm, so more of an unconscious...
2: Yeah, it’s not that... And as I said before that some of them finds it, find it easy to listen to me when I talk to the whole class. And some of them actually want, that I go and talk to them privately or in person or whatever. And as I said, that sometimes their friends could explain it better to them.
1: Mmm, yeah.
2: And then of course this has nothing to do with listening, but there are always those who actually needs it written down on the whiteboard. Because they can’t like connect the words when they are listening.
1: So, to what extent would you say that you teach listening strategies? And if you do, how would you say that you do it? Or, how do you do it?
2: I don’t think I do it, like I know that I do it. It’s just something that perhaps as I said when I walk around, I know which one needs to hear it in this manner and who needs to have it like this. And I just do it, like when you’ve done it, when you get to know different students. It is just something that you learn.
1: So it is not something that would be conscious, if you would say “what listening strategies do you apply to get a grade E?”
2: No, not that I can think of no.
1: No. Okay, to what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies? So in a conscious way I guess.
3: Yeah, yeah.
2: Of course it’s a... if you can see that it’s not working the way you are teaching, then of course then it is necessary for you to change to be able to teach all your students what’s best for them. And what way, to get them to understand what way perhaps is the best way for them. But as I said, actually I think that maybe before I, when I hadn’t worked as long as a teacher, it was important to tell them or to be more open-minded about what they need. But now when I have been working for so long, it kind of just falls into place everything and I don’t think about it. Maybe it is not the best
way but it’s been working so far, I actually have or most of my students leave ninth grade with an E at least.

1: Have you ever thought about that before then, that they, do you think “Oh, yes they do apply listening strategies” or have you looked upon that part before?
2: No, not consciously no. Because, it’s just like when I’ve said something or given them instructions or talked to them or whatever, they have like given me... the response they have given me have been the response I was waiting for. So I haven’t thought much about it, actually. I’m sorry.

1: No, that’s why we are doing this to see what teachers actually, if they do it or not. So, to what extent do you assess listening strategies? And if so, how?
2: I don’t.
1: No.
2: No.
1: Not at all, okay. And to what extent would you then say that it is important to assess listening strategies?
2: I guess, I guess it is. I guess I’m bad at assessing things.
1: Just in general?
2: No, it’s not that I don’t want to but I just keep forgetting it.
1: Okay.
2: So, but most of the time I think that I, because I know that lots of other teachers they actually, every single project they do they finish of with an assessment of how it’s gone and what they think about it. And I always forget to do that, but most of the time, actually, I talk about it when they come to me afterwards and say “oh, that wasn’t so fun or this was really good”. So, I It’s kind of like we are having a discussion about it. But it’s not like it’s something that is written down or something.

1: Do you think it would be, do you think it is important to have it in the curriculum, or in the syllabus? That it says about the listening strategies or... cause if you now feel that you maybe don’t do it consciously, do you think that it’s good that it’s in the syllabus?
2: Yes, I think so, I think so but as I said that with time it probably it comes more natural you don’t think about it. But if you haven’t been working very long, or if you’re new at this maybe it is a good thing to have it. So, okay I am not going to miss this I need to have this.
1: Någonting du vill?
3: No.
1: No. Anything you would like to add?
2: No.
Appendix 3

Transcription of interview number two

1: Interviewer nr. 1
2: Interviewee
3: Interviewer nr. 2

1: So our first question is, how long have you been working as a teacher?
2: I’ve been, I past my exam in December 1982, so I’ve been working as a teacher for 30 years. I think, yes for 30 years.

1: And what do listening strategies mean to you?

2: For me, when I just read it, yes I’ve read it. But for me, in this way, ways of making spoken words understand. Ways of listening, maybe picking up central words, or listening for special interests, words that I can get hang of the complete story.

1: So you connect that with the... So I was just thinking about the strategies to understand, because that was the... which one was the one for the grade?

3: Eh.

1: It was this one to facilitate?

3: Yeah.

1: Cause if that is something you look at when you... facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language. That they apply a strategy. Is that something you think of when you grade them? When you think of what listening strategies mean to you, how you connect that when you are grading them?

2: Not really. I, if I am honest, I am usually honest.

3: That’s good.

1: We need honest answers.

2: No, I don’t really think of the ways pupils use or get to understand what I am talking of or what their, of listening comprehension. I don’t really think of the ways, I think and I hope that I teach them ways of understanding. But I don’t think of that when I grade them. I think I just check the results and hopefully it’s good.

1: So that’s a bit connect to the next question, to what extent do you teach listening strategies? And if so how? If you do it explicitly.

2: I think and I hope that I tell them to read, for example, if you when you read when you have a listening comprehension you have questions. And to read the questions beforehand, so they know what they are listening for. It’s a way, it’s for me a normal way of doing it. That you are listening for what’s important in this question, what are you going to listen for.

1: And to what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies?

2: I haven’t thought about it. It’s more that it’s more important than anything else.

1: It’s just that...

2: It’s as important as everything else. To be able to understand the language.

1: To consciously teach it? or to just that it maybe goes in with everything else.

2: I think it goes in with everything else.

1: So you’re not going to say “Now we are gonna do listening strategies”?
2: No.
1: No.
2: No, I don’t think so.
1: To what extent do you assess listening strategies? And if so how? So when you’re maybe grading them.
2: Could you explain a little bit more what you mean? Or is it what I mean?
1: Maybe...
2: Of course we do a lot of listening comprehension, and, but I do less and less listening comprehension on tests. Because there is always one absent, it’s just of practical reasons. There is always one or two absent, and then you’re going to try to get, to be able for them to do that part of the test. I think I do more of, I’m not testing that I am more doing that in the classroom situation. And hopefully doing more of listening comprehensions instead of only testing it. And that’s a bit of practical reasons.
3: So, it’s more about the comprehension aspect of it?
1: If we just go into very narrow, just listening strategies.
2: It’s more of the comprehension.
1: So you wouldn’t just assess, maybe look at, what kind of listening strategies they would use; oh, they use this strategy, and assess it.
2: No, I don’t think so, I don’t think so. I want the comprehension of it and hopefully I have given them strategies to reach a good amount of the comprehension.
1: And then, to what extent do you think it’s important to assess listening strategies? Just that narrow part.
2: When I think about it it’s quite more important than I thought before this discussion. Yes, of course it’s important and do you want me from on a from one to ten?
1: It’s just for what reason would you think it is important then?
2: To be able to understand, to have a conversation, to be able to manage.
1: Anything else that you want to add? No, something that you’ve realised through this interview, maybe?
2: That I need to teach more listening strategies!
1: I don’t know if you have anything else?
3: No, no I’m good. Thank you!
Appendix 4

Transcription of interview number three

1: Interviewer nr. 1
2: Interviewee
3: Interviewer nr. 2

________________________________________________________________________________

1: Okay so our first question is, how long have you’ve been working as a teacher?
2: Eh, I’ve been working for 32 years.
1: Okay, what do listening strategies mean to you?
2: Listening strategies, it depends on the purpose of the text or the program that you are listening to. You need strategies to listen for details sometimes, and sometimes you need to listen to get a understanding of more of the whole situation or the whole information package sort of thing. So you need different strategies in different situations, or for different purposes.
1: And, to what extent do you think you teach listening strategies? And if so how?
2: I talk about it, and give examples so that if they for example are supposed to listen for a detail like a time or a certain number or... I’ll talk to them about that, now try and focus on the key words, the question or if it’s more of a understanding of a situation like we have on the national tests. Sometimes they play up a scene at the dentist and then students are supposed to understand that this is at the dentist. Then you are more after, don’t focus to much on separate words try and get the understanding of the whole, and so forth.

1: So it’s not like you would say now we are gonna do listening strategies, it’s just within the whole thing you do it?

2: Yes.

1: So they are not really, they would not know “oh, we do listening”, if you would ask them would they understand “oh, that was a listening strategy we just went through”? So just like to help them understand.

2: Yes, I talk about it, it’s mainly those two ways of listening. Either you focus on detail or you focus on the whole.

1: Yeah.

3: Yeah.

2: And I do possibly mention the word strategy, we talk a lot about reading strategies with the same focus. Like this is a search reading you are just gonna find out what time this program starts and finishes, or this is a fiction story and you are supposed to understand what it’s about. And what persons are involved, and so forth, but you don’t have to understand each word. And I talk about, I probably use the word strategy in those contexts.

1: Okay, to what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies?

2: I think it’s important, it’s part of the formative assessment you do. So that they can develop further, that they understand that it is useful to have different strategies. For further development.

1: To what extent do you assess listening strategies? And if so how?

2: Well it’s part of the whole assessment I think. If they answer questions on something that they’ve listen to, I can then see if they’ve used or if they can use a strategy for focusing on keywords for example. And I can talk to them about that, I don’t think that here you haven’t understood the whole concept but you’ve focused to much on the detail. And that makes you miss the whole point of the text or vice versa. Here you’ve listen to everything but you’ve missed the actual point that you were supposed to listen for. Next time when we do a similar thing try and use this strategy.

1: So you feel that you can see what kind of strategy they’ve used when they’ve done an, maybe a listening comprehension?

2: More that I can see if the haven’t used it. If they’ve missed it.
1: Cause I’m thinking about in the connection here that it’s, for the grade E, to facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language that they can choose and apply a strategy for listening. Then would you know that they actually choosed, chosen, something and apply a strategy for listening?
2: Well if they, I assume that if they have succeeded with the task.
1: Yeah.
2: But If they’ve not succeeded, well then they have missed some... they haven’t got the concept of the strategy clear. And that’s when we have to talk about it so that they can do that next time.
1: And, to what extent do you think it is important to assess listening strategies?
2: Well, as I said, I think it’s important to make them understand that they have use for these strategies and that they are useful in different contexts. They might not think, think in those terms if you don’t talk about it. So it’s important I think.
1: Yeah, anything else you would like to add? That you’ve thought of now or you think that you do this so it’s not much else to say.
2: It’s probably an eyeopener, because you sort of don’t do it that consciously. You don’t sit down and document maybe, as you should.
1: No.
2: Maybe you should actually have that as part of your documentation.
1: Mmm, since it is a...
2: Yes, not just talk about it.
1: No, okay. Thank you very much.
Appendix 5

Transcription of interview number four

1: Interviewer nr. 1
2: Interviewee
3: Interviewer nr. 2

1: Ok, så vår första fråga är då, how long have you been working as a teacher?
2: Och det är 18 år.
1: What do listening strategies mean to you?
1: Hur kopplar du det då för det står ju att de ska kunna apply a strategy for listening, om du nu ska koppla det till, om det nu är då att de ska leta efter någonting, hur ska du kunna se det?
2: Man kan göra på olika sätt men, jag försöker få de att vara uppmärksamma på de här nyckel, alltså på de här frågenyckelorden, de här w orden: who, where, what, when and why osv. Att de, allstå de är ju keywords tycker jag som de ska ska, alltså om man har prov exempelvis. De är ju, på något sätt jobbar man ju mot de nationella proven i nian för det är ju där man vill att de ska lyckas
bra. Och där är det ju alltid avlyssningsövningar och då försöker jag lära de innan, att de i frågorna där ska leta efter dem här keywords. Vad är det man ska lyssna efter och gärna stryka under de där kanske, så att de uppmärksammar de här why eller who eller where eller when eller what eller vad det kan vara. Men sen kan det ju också vara, i ett annat sammanhang kan det ju vara att man visar någon bild innan man lyssnar på en text.

1: Det lite, går ju in lite med to what extent do you teach listening strategies? and if so how?
2: Ja, det gör ju det. Ja, det gör det, jätte mycket.
1: Ja, så det är så du känner att du gör, att du ger de lite olika, att du kanske gör en bild eller att du gör...
2: Ja, och om man ser att trean där också , jag tycker att dem... Ja tvåan är ju att man, alltså vad listening strategies vad det, vad som, vad det menas, det är ju att man ska veta vad man ska lyssna efter och då finns det ju ollika sätt. Och de olika sätten går ju in i då trean, det är de jag försöker lära eleverna.
1: Ja, precis.
2: Och så kanske när man har gjort någon avlyssning eller så , så kanske man går tillbaka och inte bara tittar på om de har lyssnat efter rätt svar, utan fråga dem hur visste ni att det var detta ni skulle lyssna efter. Och då kanske de tittar ja men det står ju så i frågan eller det var ju det ordet där som visade det och försöker göra de lite smarta på det.
1: Mmm, ja.
1: Ja, och to what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies?
2: Alltså, det är ju inte det viktigaste kanske i engelskan. Men det är ju en del av det för det kan ju, det kan göra så att de förstår mer av en text. Så att på ett sätt är det viktigt, men de måste ju måste ju ha en baskunskap också. Men det är viktigt, ja för att det kan göra att de förstår mer av en text om de kan ta till sig mer, om de har de här knepen de här strategierna, så kan ju det höja elevernas förståelse för en text.
2: Mmm, om du kollar liksom i koppling till kursplanen då för det står att... Nu har vi inte med det just det citatet här, men det har ju lite med med det här med att i för betyget E så ska dem kunna använda sig av en strategi för att lyssna. Och så står det även att läraren ska ge verktygen till eleverna, att de ska kunna använda sig av, och då kan man ju ändå i koppling till det här...
1: Då måste vi ju göra det. Då måste vi ju göra det.
2: Ja, om man kollar på det så, så blir det ju nog...
1: Naturligt att man...
2: Ja.
1: Man måste göra det... Och jag tycker att det känns meninglöst. Alltså när jag jobbar med lärobokstexter så lyssnar vi, i stort sett, alltid på dem utan böcker först så de bara får lyssna på texten. Och då måste de ju ha någonting att lyssna efter. För det går ju inte att bara att sätta på, idag ska vi lyssna på en text den handlar om James liksom. Det går ju inte bara, utan de måste ju ha någonting och lyssna efter. Antingen, och det kan man ju göra på massor med olika sätt. Antingen ställer man frågor på det, eller stanna mitt i vad tror ni kommer hända sen, eller ja det finns ju tusen olika sätt. Men så när vi lyssnar har vi alltid någon typ av avlyssningsövning, om man kan kalla det så. Och på något sätt hör ju det ihop med, det är ju en listening strategy som jag alltid gör i samband med en avlyssningsövning.

2: Mmm.

1: För de är ju så duktiga i engelska så att där ska man ju, tycker jag, aldrig lyssna med bara texten utan vi lyssnar också utan text.

2: Ok så vår nästa fråga är då, to what extent do you assess listening strategies? And if so how?

1: Det gör man ju... Det gör man ju väldigt väldigt ofta inte bara vid avlyssningsövningar, utan det är ju, det är ju egentligen hela tiden när de pratar engelska i klassrummet. För att om de diskuterar så ser man ju om de, vad de förstår och vad de plockar upp av varandra. Och de har ju med strategier att göra, för man måste ju ha en strategi för att förstå.

2: Mmm, men skulle du kunna så här pin pointa just att den här använder sig av den här strategin. För det stod någonting i kursplanen om att för högre betyg ska man kunna använda sig av flera strategier. Men hur ska man kunna...

1: Nej, det kan inte jag bedöma. Det kan inte jag bedöma, jag kan bara, jag tror att jag bara, om jag ska säga så kan jag bara bedöma hur mycket de förstår inte vilken strategi de gör för att komma fram till det.

2: Mmm, ok.

1: Vad det det svaret ni ville ha? Passar det in med era slutsatser om att det är svårt?

2: Och sen då till sista frågan, to what extent do you think it is important to assess listening strategies? Och då är det verkligen så här listening strategies vi tänker på. Om det är viktigt att kolla på just dem?


2: Om du kopplar det då till kursplanen...

1: Ja, då stämmer det ju inte. Då blir det fel.

2: Då tycker du...

1: Då blir det ju fel, ja.
2: Så lite kritik där till...

1: Ja, ja. För jag tycker inte att, det kvittar, ja det är ja.

2: Ja, ok. Ja, är det någonting du vill tillägga som du har tänkt på? Om detta ämnet...

1: Nej. Det var allt.

2: Tack så mycket.
Appendix 6

Listening Strategies
- Understanding, Teaching and Assessing

We are two students majoring in English, from Malmö Högskola, named Emma Ivarsson and Malin Palm. This term we are writing our degree paper with the focus on if and how teachers understand, teach and assess listening strategies. The subject area was inspired by the following quotes from the syllabus of English:

“Strategies to understand details and context in spoken language […], such as adapting listening […] to the type of communication, contents and purpose” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 35).

“To facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language and texts, pupils can choose and apply a strategy for listening” (Skolverket, 2011a p. 37).

Your participance in this study is both voluntary and anonymous. Furthermore, you can discontinue your participance at any time. Moreover, all answers will be processed anonymously and the data we collect will only be used in our study. If you have any further questions regarding our study you can reach us at emmaivarsson87@hotmail.com and/or torstensson_malin_69@hotmail.com.

Thank you for participating!

Questionnaire

Age: ________________
Gender: _____________

1. How long have you been working as a teacher?
2. _______________________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________________
4. What do listening strategies mean to you?
5. _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
6. _______________________________________________________________________
7. To what extent do you think it is important that teachers are aware of different listening strategies?
8.________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
9.
10. To what extent do you teach listening strategies, and if so how?
11.________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
12.
13. To what extent do you think it is important to teach listening strategies?
14.________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
15.
16.a. To what extent do you think your students are aware of different listening strategies?
17.________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
18.
19.b. To what extent do you think your students are able to choose between these different strategies and apply them?
20.________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
21.
22. To what extent do you assess listening strategies, and if so how?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

23. To what extent do you think it is important to assess listening strategies?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

24. Do you have anything you want to add concerning listening strategies?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________