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Feedback as Formative Assessment on EFL Students’ Writing

Återkoppling som formativ bedömning på elevers skrivande inom engelska som främmande språk

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Preface

With our signatures we hereby state that we have been equally involved throughout the process of this degree project. This includes formulating the research questions, finding participants, conducting the interviews, transcribing and analysing the material, finding previous research and literature, and writing the different sections of the project.

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Abstract

Providing feedback on students’ written tasks is a common aspect in today’s classrooms. Feedback affects students’ written language learning by either enhancing it or hindering it, depending on what, how and when it is given. The purpose of this degree project is to research how teachers perceive students’ writing process, how they give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom, and the reasons behind their chosen strategies. Semi-structured interviews with two English teachers teaching years 4-6 were used as a method for this study. To support and analyse the data from the interviews, this project contains an overview of the fields of written language learning, formative assessment, effective formative feedback and writing as a process using literature and previous research. The literature and research show that teaching writing in a foreign language should focus on enhancing students’ interest in writing by supporting their curiosity and willingness to become writers. This can be done by focusing on content of a text instead of grammar or spelling, as this does not support young learners in their writing process. Teachers therefore need to provide feedback on aspects such as content, coherence and structure and give students information on how they can proceed in and improve a task. That is when the feedback will have the most positive effect on students’ learning. Further, the process-based approach of writing is argued to be beneficial for students’ learning as it encourages students to take an active part in their writing process. The major conclusions of this study are that the two teachers prefer to give informal and oral selective feedback on students’ writing tasks during the task. They give feedback once or twice on a task and often in the middle, to scaffold a progression. However, this is not in alignment with process-based writing. The study also shows that the two teachers are not aware of the theories underpinning writing as a process. Instead, they are well trained in ways of formative assessment and scaffolding language learning, but not the process-based approach of writing.

Keywords: effective formative feedback, formative assessment, writing as a process, language learning, EFL learning
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1. Introduction

Giving feedback on students’ performances is a common aspect of teaching today. However, during our teacher practicums in the school years 4-6, we observed that when teachers gave feedback on students’ texts in English the feedback was mostly focused on correcting grammar and spelling mistakes. In several cases, teachers crossed over the misspelled words and wrote the correct spelling. The student could therefore easily fix the mistakes without any further effort. However, B. Lundahl (2014) emphasises that “[…] teacher feedback cannot be reduced to error correction. Teachers should also look at pupils’ willingness to write, content, structure, cohesion/linking, comprehensibility and vocabulary/phrases” (p. 192). It will never be enough to provide comments in a text to the students unless the comments are directed in a way were the student needs to evaluate, investigate and use the feedback, as just underlining error in a text will never support the students’ progress as writers (B. Lundahl, 2014, p. 193). For feedback to be supportive, effective and fill a formative purpose, Sadler (1989) argues that the feedback provided should aim to fill the gap of where the student currently is and how to reach the aim of the task (p. 120). Wiliam (2011) further emphasizes this when he states that feedback needs not only to be accurate, but also helpful:

I remember talking to a middle school student who was looking at the feedback his teacher had given him on a science assignment. The teacher had written, “You need to be more systematic in planning your scientific inquiries.” I asked the student what that meant to him, and he said, “I don’t know. If I knew how to be more systematic, I would have been more systematic the first time.” This kind of feedback is accurate – it is describing what needs to happen – but it is not helpful because the learner does not know how to use the feedback to improve. (p. 120)

The Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool Class and the Recreation Centre 2011 (2011) states that teaching should be organized so that students can:
• develop in accordance with their own capacity, and at the same time are stimulated into using and developing all their ability,
• view knowledge as meaningful and that they make progress in their own learning,
• receive support in their language and communicative development.

(The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 16)

As seen in the curriculum (2011), the role of support and progress for students’ language learning is included and therefore needs to be an essential part of the way teachers teach. One way of supporting students in their learning is by providing them with the adequate forms of assessment that will stimulate students in developing their different learning processes. Assessment should not be the end-product but rather an ongoing process where students continuously can use the assessment in order to make progress in their learning. The importance of making progress in learning is further emphasised within the curriculum (2011) as it is expressed in the knowledge requirements for written English at the end of year six: “To clarify and vary their communication, pupils can work on and make some simple improvements to their communications” (p.35). Making improvements is one way of progressing learning; but for students to be able to make these improvements, they must be supported and should also be taught strategies for how to properly use teachers’ feedback.

According to C. Lundahl (2014), assessment today should strive towards giving every individual student a lifelong desire to learn by offering assessment as support throughout the learning process (p. 12). However, Cameron (2001) states that teachers usually adapt their teaching towards larger summative assessments (p. 215). Swedish schools have a tradition of measuring learning through standardized and summative assessment such as The National Tests [Nationella proven] and The Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA]. When the tests demand teachers to train their students for a certain purpose, this will be the focus point in the classroom whether it supports language learning or not (Cameron, 2001, p. 215-216). Cameron (2001) further states that although teachers want to develop and make creative lessons to support children in learning new languages,
they often prioritize tasks directly connected to the national tests, as they are scared that the pupils will not get enough time to practice and perform well on these tests (p. 215-216).

When teaching writing in English, the curriculum (2011) states:

Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding […] written English, being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients. (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 32)

The curriculum (2011) further states that the core content for teaching English should include “Language phenomena to clarify and enrich communication such as pronunciation and intonation, spelling and punctuation, polite phrases, and other fixed language expressions and grammatical structures” (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 34). The curriculum (2011) describes aspects such as grammar and spelling as important factors when learning to speak and write in English. However, it also states that these phenomena should be used to “[…] clarify and enrich communication […]” (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 34), which means that students cannot only be taught how to spell words and their correct grammar forms but should instead be taught how to use different words and expressions for different purposes. Learning English is also expressed as including many other aspects than language phenomena. To “formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the spoken and written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients” (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 32) cannot simply be attained by only producing grammatically correct texts. Writing should instead be seen as a process and not as an end-product (Cameron, 2001, p.11-12; Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 132; Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 366; Haiyan & Rilong, 2016, p. 78).
Ho (2006) claims that traditional approaches such as product-based writing that only focuses on the end-product of writing inhibits the students by not providing opportunities to incorporate own ideas and thoughts, resulting in students not knowing how to use strategies for writing independently, and go on to find little pleasure in writing (p. 23). In order to develop in their writing strategies and processes, students need to be supported with effective formative feedback and teachers need to be educated in how to use feedback as formative assessment. The curriculum (2011) states that the head teacher should take responsibility for making sure “the staff receive the competence development required to be able to carry out their work in a professional manner” (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 21). If teachers are not trained within their teaching training programs they need opportunities to do so from their workplace. According to Finnegans and Wärnsby (Personal communication, February 14, 2017), most students at primary teacher training programs in Sweden are not trained in the approach of process-based writing. However, training within formative assessment and effective formative feedback exist, as this is something we as students ourselves have experienced, although we have not experienced training in the relation between effective formative feedback and writing as a process. Therefore, the purpose of our degree project is to research how Swedish teachers perceive writing as a process and give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom, and the reasons behind their chosen strategies.
2. Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of this degree project is to research how teachers perceive writing as a process and give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom, and the reasons behind their chosen strategies.

2.1 Research questions

1. Do teachers give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom?
2. If so, how, when, what kind of feedback and why?
3. Do teachers teach writing in English as a process?
4. If so, how? If not, why?
3. Theoretical Background

As mentioned in the introduction, effective formative feedback and the view of writing as a process are essential for students’ written language learning. Teachers therefore need to become aware of the benefits writing as a process and effective formative feedback serve for students learning to write in English. This section will therefore provide a background for how students learn to write in English as a foreign language, how language should be assessed formatively, what effective formative feedback means and what theories of writing as a process which this degree project lies on.

3.1 Learning English as a Foreign Language: Writing

Cameron (2001) highlights that one of the most important things an educator teaching a new language needs to remember is that all children come with different experiences, strengths and weaknesses from learning their first language (p. 13). When children learn to write in a foreign language, the writing should be done as a process where the teacher builds upon the students’ previous knowledge. Read (2007) argues that it is important to value students’ interest in writing and support their curiosity to make them want to write (p. 49). There are several ways this can be done, for example, by letting the students write texts that are short and built on their interests. This can be supported by sample texts, text models or scaffolding from the teacher along the writing process (Read, 2007, p. 49). Read (2007) highlights the need to not focus on spelling or grammar mistakes, as the important focus in the primary years should be to get enthusiastic and confident students (p. 50). This is also supported by Cameron (2001), who mentions that students need help to focus on the right aspects of language, such as content, as teaching grammar in an early age will not benefit the language learning process. This would come at a later age, when there already is a solid base in the form of obtained experiences of writing (p. 13; p. 20). B. Lundahl (2014) points out that most people understand more than they can express (p. 172). In Sweden, children are surrounded with English on an everyday basis through television, radio, multimedia, the Internet, and so on, but there is rarely a demand for them to interact or express themselves. This is one of the reasons why B. Lundahl (2014) emphasises that learning to write takes longer time than learning to speak or listen (p. 172). However, the
importance of learning how to write cannot be neglected, as it plays a primary role in students’ lives. B. Lundahl (2014) emphasises that this is due to people, and especially children, having a need to learn how to express themselves, mostly due to the importance of learning how to formulate one’s views and opinions to achieve a certain confidence and power to use the language, not only to know it (p. 172; p. 180).

3.2 Formative Assessment
Sadler (1989) describes formative assessment to be used for assessing students along a learning process and takes place over time with the purpose to improve students’ learning. One tool of formative assessment is providing feedback with the purpose to improve students’ tasks and to fill the gap of where the student currently is and where he or she is going in order to reach the aim of the task. Formative assessment is often discussed in relation to summative assessment, which is explained as assessment used to summarize students’ achievements at the end of a task, and in that way having no immediate impact on the students’ active learning (p. 120). However, formative assessment has gained attention as it is argued to benefit students in their learning by offering different types of assessment. Wiliam (2011), one of the leading researchers within the field of formative assessment, is one who argues formative assessment to be substantial for students’ learning. This due to students learn in different ways, and teachers should therefore use different strategies when teaching and assessing. However, Wiliam (2011) poses that assessment should steam from five key strategies:

1. Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning
3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward
4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another
5. Activating learners as the owners of their own learning (p. 44)
Another researcher within the field of formative assessment who agrees with Wiliam (2011) about the five key strategies is C. Lundahl (2014). C. Lundahl (2014) argues that assessment should be used to promote lifelong learning where the individual learns to make active choices and become aware of one’s own learning and needs (p. 12). Placing the responsibility of assessment solely on the teacher does not activate the students in their learning process.

3.2.1 Feedback as Formative Assessment

Feedback is explained as a key element within formative assessment as it mediates the ways students can make improvements and progress to their tasks (Wiliam, 2011, p. 44). Similar to Wiliam (2011), Hattie and Timperley (2007) explain feedback as “[...] information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p. 81). Further on, feedback as formative assessment is important, according to Sadler (1989), as “Few physical, intellectual or social skills can be acquired satisfactorily simply through being told about them. Most require practice in a supportive environment which incorporates feedback loops.” (p. 119).

When assessing students formatively, Sadler (1989) argues that teachers must have a clear criteria or clear concept of the quality of a task. These criteria or qualities must then be passed on to students so that students become aware of what they are being assessed on and what qualities the teacher will look for within their work. One way of mediating these criteria and qualities to students is through descriptive statements, which can be given through formative feedback (p. 121). When feedback is directed to a specific task and how to reach the learning outcomes to that specific task, the feedback will have the most formative effect, and least effective is feedback that is directed to students’ personas, such as praise (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 84). This, claim Hattie and Timperley (2007), is due to the feedback regarding praise being not directly connected to the task and what needs to be done to fill the gap between the students’ current position and the learning outcome (p. 84).
It is often discussed whether teachers should give comprehensive or selective feedback. Comprehensive feedback refers to feedback that comments on all errors within a text, whereas selective feedback refers to feedback only on errors that are seen as substantial (Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2012, p. 60). It is argued by Lee (2011) that teachers should not always give students comprehensive feedback as it can be discouraging for students: “[…] students who produce a large number of errors are likely to be less proficient and, naturally, they will find it difficult to cope with a large amount of error feedback” (p. 387). As suggestions to provide more effective formative feedback to students, Lee (2011) argues that teachers should give feedback on criteria or feedback forms that are established before the writing and shared with students so that they know what they are being assessed on and can get examples of what good writing includes (p. 389). Hattie and Timperley (2007) also question the purpose and meaning of corrective feedback, such as grammar mistakes, small/capital letters or punctuation. Hattie and Timperley (2007) point out that when feedback is directed to that level, then it is easy that the purpose of the task disappears, but also that there will not be a learning outcome as the feedback is directed at the least important things (p. 91).

Further, Bruno and Santos (2011) highlight that the length of comments could mean that students do not act upon the feedback if it urges them to act upon several things at once as they could get easily bored when faced with the excessive amounts of comments (p. 115-116). Similar to Lee (2011, p. 387), Bruno and Santos (2011) therefore express the importance to be selective and only provide feedback on the most essential things in order to maintain students’ interest and motivation (p. 116). In addition, Bruno and Santos (2011) state that writing feedback takes time since each assignment and individual student most likely are different and therefore need different types of comments:

[…] it is not simple for teachers to write comments quickly. […] This process is slow because it is demanding and difficult. It is not easy to predict what is appropriate in each situation. We have to know the students’ skills very well and foresee their difficulties. (p. 118)
Although it is time consuming to provide individual feedback, the benefits it has on students’ learning are too substantial to be neglected.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) created a model for how effective formative feedback should be given (see figure 1).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** A model of feedback to enhance learning. Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) model for how effective feedback should be given (p. 87).

Firstly, the feedback’s purpose needs to be to fill the gap of where the student is in a task and where the student needs to go to reach the aims of that task. This is done by students and teachers using different strategies to complete the task, such as students increasing their efforts or the teacher scaffolding with appropriate learning strategies and feedback. Effective formative feedback should strive towards asking and answering three key questions: “Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 86). When answering these three
questions, Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that the students need to be involved in the process. When the student is not included in the process and left in the dark, the support of effective feedback does not serve its purpose. If the teachers tackle all the responsibility for the assessment, there will not be a learning process for the students, and the feedback can therefore not be counted as effective formative feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 88). These questions could then be answered at four different levels, which Hattie and Timperley (2007) refer to as task level, process level, self-regulation level and self level. Task level refers to feedback given on the task at hand, and is often associated with corrective feedback such as grammar mistakes or if a task is correct or incorrect. Process level refers to feedback given on how to progress with tasks using different strategies, and therefore engaging students in further learning. Self-regulation is the level where feedback is given about how students deal with certain tasks, such as their commitments, confidence and self-control about the tasks. The self level is described as the least beneficial level to give feedback on as it comments on personal feedback, such as praise that is not connected to the specific task (p. 86-96).

3.3 Writing as a Process

Before the late 1900s, writing was dealt with as a finished product (Kamal & Faraj, 2015). However, since the 1970s some classrooms have tried to focus more on the process itself and create good writers, as this will develop further language learning when the students engage in the process of writing. In many cases, students do not know how to write texts when it comes to organizing their ideas, organizing the paper itself, structure, content, design and language use, and it is suggested that the learning process of writing includes several aspects that need to be scaffolded (p. 131-132). These aspects include five steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, according to Laksmi (2006, as cited in Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 132). These steps of the writing process are explained by Kamal and Faraj (2015) as beginning with prewriting, which refers to when students start to form their writing ideas. Drafting is when students start their writing process; and during this process, content is attended to rather than the language. When the students have drafted, they move on to revising with the help of the teacher. This means that the teacher provides effective formative feedback in the form of discussions and comments. Based on the
formative feedback, the students then revise their text, but the focus is still not on grammar or minor mistakes, but instead on substantial aspects within the text. The next step leads to editing, where the students finally corrects their text in-depth by looking at language aspects such as grammar or spelling. The final step leads to the aspect of publishing, where the students finish and share their text with the teacher, and then share it with other recipients (p. 131-134).

Kamal and Faraj’s (2015) description of what the writing process includes is similar to the description made by Flower and Hayes (1981) within their theory “The cognitive process of writing” (p. 365). The cognitive process of writing suggests that the writing process consists of three stages: planning the task, translating it and reviewing it (p. 369). During the planning of a task, the writer generates ideas, and turns to his or her previous stored knowledge about, for example, topics, writing strategies and how to structure the writer’s internal ideas into writing. Within the process of planning, the writer sets goals for the task. However, Flower and Hayes (1981) also highlight that the process of planning and goal-setting is no fixed process that would take place at the beginning of the task, but is rather an ongoing process throughout the writing. When the writer has generated some of the ideas internally, the next step would be the process of translating where the writer formulates the ideas in visible writing. After this comes the process of reviewing the text, which includes the two sub-processes of evaluating and revising the work. Even though the different processes of writing are presented as linear in the article, Flower and Hayes (1981) pinpoint that it is not something that writers do in a linear order but rather move between them during the writing process (p. 365-374). The role of effective formative feedback is therefore essential since students often come to school with experiences and ideas but not necessary strategies or knowledge on how to compose these into the writing process. It is further due to that feedback cannot be compressed into correcting errors but should instead draw attention to how students can progress in the different aspects of writing. Effective formative feedback on students’ writing should therefore focus on content, organization, coherence, strategies of writing and lastly language.
Haiyan and Rilong (2016) describe learning to write to be a challenge for EFL learners as it is a productive skill that requires the writer to be much more explicit when composing ideas than one would if speaking (p. 76). Further, Sadler (1989) argues learning to be multidimensional and cannot be seen as a package of skills or knowledge that can be measured as correct or incorrect, but instead it should be seen as a continuously growing process (p. 123). Further, research suggests that experienced students themselves view writing as a process. Results from a study from Zamel (1983) show that students prioritize exploring and clarifying their ideas within their texts over language concerns. Only after they had gotten their ideas and meaning in place did the students addressed aspects such as grammar and spelling. However, Zamel (1983) notes that writing as a process might not be experienced as such by unskilled or beginning writers as they are not yet familiar with the strategies within the process. These strategies should, however, be practiced and favoured over the product of the writing, as Zamel (1983) argues that the best way to promote language learning is through purposeful and communicatively use (p. 165-184). Haiyan and Rilong (2016) describe the process-based approach and desirable as:

[...] it is learner-centered, and encourages the students’ full participation; the students have to cooperate with each other and learn from each other in order to learn in this process. In other words, they have to engage in collaborative work to achieve good writing; collaborative work can broaden students’ horizons and enrich their knowledge. (p. 78)

However, Haiyan and Rilong (2016) also emphasise that the approach can be challenging as it places great demands on teachers to be knowledgeable about the process-based approach and how to successfully use it within their classrooms (p. 78).
4. Methods

For this degree project, qualitative research through semi-structured interviews have been used as a method. According to Bryman (2008), qualitative research refers to data that is inductive, interpretative and constructive. This could for example concern research about peoples’ social behaviour, such as opinions or choices (p. 340-341). Since the purpose of our study was to research teachers’ choices within the classroom qualitative research through semi-structured interviews was chosen as a method. Further, this section will describe the ethical considerations undertaken for the study. In addition, we address the process of how the participants for the study were chosen, who was included and why will be clarified, and how the interviews were carried out. In addition, procedure of data analysis is explained.

4.1 Ethical Considerations

This degree project has been carried out in accordance with the ethical recommendations from Vetenskapsrådet (n.d.). These include the information requirement, the confidentiality requirement, the requirement of usage, and the consent requirement. To fulfil these requirements, we sent a letter (see Appendix 1) to possible participants that explained the aim and purpose of the study. In addition, the letter stated the conditions for participating, such as informing that the participants could leave the study at any point and what participation could mean for future research. The letter also described that the data collected would only be used within this degree project and that it would not be possible to trace back to the participant, or his or her work place. The participants’ names are therefore pseudonyms in the degree project, and the raw data from the interviews will be destroyed once the paper has been published at MUEP.

4.2 Selection of Participants

For our research, a targeted selection (Bryman, 2008, p. 434) of participants was used that focused on teachers teaching English in years 4-6 with experience within formative assessment. The reason for this was to make sure that the participants of our study had a
background within formative assessment in a primary EFL classroom. Convenience sampling (Bryman, 2008, p. 194) was further taken into consideration to receive participants geographically close to our location as this study was time restricted and we would not have had time to travel long distances. However, this also means that the result cannot be generalized as the participants are not representative of the Swedish teacher profession as a whole (Bryman, 2008, p. 194). Since it was difficult to find participants, we took snowball sampling (Bryman 2008, p. 654) into considerations, meaning that participants were asked to recommend other potential participants.

4.3 Participants

Based on our targeted selection, we created a letter that informed potential participants about the purpose of our study. The letter was sent to 15 schools that were located geographically close to where we live as to manage the time it would take to travel. Out of the 15 schools, five replied, whereas two politely turned us down due to the pressure of carrying out and assessing the National Tests. Three teachers responded that they were able to participate. However, one of the three teachers that was going to participate forgot about the scheduled appointment and was unable to reschedule and participate.

The first teacher (Veronica) works in a smaller town in south of Sweden. The school has 410 students in the years F-9. Veronica has worked as a teacher in years 4-6 for 40 years and taught English for approximately 38 years.

The second teacher (Andrea) works in another small town located in south of Sweden. The school has approximately 650 students in the years F-6. Andrea has worked as a teacher in years 4-6 for 20 years and previously worked in years 1-3 for 12 years. She has taught English for approximately 10 years.

4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

The research method used for this degree project was semi-structured interviews with two teachers. Alvehus (2013) states that interviews are a beneficial method for finding out
peoples’ thoughts, feelings and reasons for certain actions (p. 80). Since the aim of our study was to find out how teachers value and use feedback as formative assessment on students’ written task and their reasons for their chosen strategies, it was decided that interviews would be the best method. The interviews followed a semi-structured form, meaning that open-ended questions were created before the interviews, but the order of the questions asked and inclusion of follow-up questions differed based on how the person being interviewed responded (Bryman, 2008, p. 654). This allowed the interview process to be flexible and gave the interviewees the opportunity to develop their answers in-depth (Bryman, 2008, p. 415).

For the interviews, a guide was created that contained interview questions divided into four sections: knowledge background, feedback as formative assessment, written language learning, and teacher collaboration and development (see Appendix 2). The questions were divided into the four sections to structure the teachers’ answers and the analysis of the data. The first section asked questions regarding teachers’ background within their profession and formative assessment. The second and third sections asked questions about teachers’ use of feedback on students’ written tasks as well as students written language learning. The fourth section highlighted teacher collaboration within their workplace and possible development of feedback as formative assessment. The second and third section relates directly to the research questions, while the first and fourth section exists to support an understanding of the data collected.

4.5 Procedure for the Interviews

Since we wanted as honest answers as possible, the interviewees were informed that they were going to be asked about feedback as formative assessment, but the actual questions were not sent out beforehand. Alvehus (2013) states that interviews do not necessarily reflect other contexts such as a person claiming to do one thing but doing something else. By providing the participants with the topic of the study, it gives them a chance to structure their thoughts without modelling their answers beforehand (p. 86).
The participants had the opportunity to choose where the interviews would take place. In addition, the interviews were carried out in Swedish to make sure that the teachers would feel comfortable by using their first language (Bryman, 2008, p. 421). Both participants chose to have the interviews take place at their workplace in a smaller conference room where we would not be interrupted.

Further, the interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and a smartphone with the permission from the teachers. The reason for choosing two ways to record was to make sure no data was lost. Alvehus (2013) states that recording could possibly make the participants feel limited in their responses (p. 85). We therefore explained to the participants that the reasons for recording was to make sure that the data collected during the interviews would represent the participants' answers correctly and fully. The interviews were carried out with both students, but one student was in charge of the questioning and the other student listened and complemented if something was forgotten. Each student led one interview each. Before the interview began, the ethical considerations was once more explained to the participants to ensure understanding of the conditions for participating. The interviews then lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were transcribed the same day.

4.6 Analysis

The interviews were transcribed in full except greetings, explanation of the ethical considerations, sounds or lack of sounds such as laughter and pauses. Although the interviews were carried out in Swedish, the quotes used in the result and discussion section were translated to English. Doing this adds an element of our interpretation to what the teachers said. However, the interviews have been analysed carefully to assure the teachers’ answers are represented accurately. In addition, three questions were sent by email to the teachers to complement the interviews (see Appendix 3).
5. Results and Discussion

Under this section, the results from the interviews with the two primary English teachers are presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical background and the research questions. The first section will present teachers descriptions of effective formative feedback and how they relate to the theories presented in the theoretical background regarding formative assessment. The next three sections aims to answer the first and second research question: Do teachers give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom? If so, when, how, and what kind of feedback? The final sections aims to answer the third and fourth research question: Do teachers teach writing in English as a process? If so, how? If not why?

5.1 What are teachers’ perceptions of effective formative feedback?

When Andrea was asked to describe feedback as formative assessment, she referred to it as “when you get to know where you can improve your text, how you move on and how you can do it better”, and in that sense scaffold a progress in the learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe effective feedback in a similar way by saying that it should strive towards answering: “Where am I going? […] How am I going? […] and Where to next?”, which are presented in their “model of feedback to enhance learning” (p. 87). These questions are essential in order for the feedback to fill a formative purpose as it activates the students in the learning process.

Veronica describes feedback as formative assessment as “feedback is supposed to point forward, you should not focus on the things that have been bad but the feedback should highlight what the student did really well.” This is in accordance with how Sadler (1989) explains feedback as a tool to improve students’ learning by moving the student forward (p. 120). However, Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue in their “model of feedback to enhance learning” that effective feedback should be directed to a specific task and how to make improvements to it (p. 87). If the feedback given would only highlight what the students did
well without providing information of how to progress in the task, the feedback would be
given on self level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 96) and would therefore be the least
effective type of feedback. It was not clarified during the interview whether Veronica gives
praise or highlights good aspects that can be improved further within the task.

Both teachers’ statements about how they perceive effective formative feedback are similar
to the theories of Wiliam (2011). Wiliam (2011) argues that formative feedback should
involve the five key strategies of:

1. Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities, and learning tasks
   that elicit evidence of learning
3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward
4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another
5. Activating learners as the owners of their own learning (p. 44)

The first key strategy of clarifying and sharing learning criteria can be found in Veronica’s beliefs, when she says that students need to know what they have to work on which should be connected to having clear goals of a task, how to get there, and what to learn. She also says that as a teacher she wants students to be in charge of their own learning, which can be connected back to the fifth key strategy. Further, Veronica and Andrea acknowledge the importance of feedback students can give each other, which is in alignment with key strategy four. Veronica views this as a type of spontaneous feedback where students can discuss in a relaxed environment without feeling pressured by the teacher. The reasons for finding evidence of Wiliam’s theories in Andrea’s and Veronica’s answers could be due to that they both express that they have been influenced by Wiliam (2011) in the ways they give formative assessment. Veronica and Andrea explain that the school have provided the teachers with literature by Wiliam (2015) to develop their knowledge of formative assessment. Strategies described by Wiliam (2015) have then been tried and implemented in Veronica’s and Andrea’s classrooms.
Moreover, Andrea and Veronica have gotten opportunities to develop their knowledge about formative assessment by travelling abroad, attending lectures, and participating in collaboration amongst teachers in the form of study groups. However, none of the education that they have taken part in has concerned formative assessment within English teaching, which both teachers highlight there is a lack of. Veronica says that it is instead always “welcome to Social Study days [SO-dagarna], Science Study days [NO-dagarna]. Science and math studies have been prioritized for a long time.” She also expresses that she often looks for courses within English at, for example, The Swedish Board of Education’s website [Skolverkets hemsida], but never finds anything. Andrea expresses herself similarly as she says that she would like to take part in education concerning English teaching as much of the education given concerns about maths and science studies [NO]. She finds this interesting as English is a core subject in Swedish schools and should therefore be more prioritized than it is today. To address this issue, she has been taking part in courses connected to Swedish teaching, which she then has applied to her teaching in English. She says this is important as the methods within learning language are the same and can therefore be transferred to any language. However, even if assessment in language can be transferred to other languages, it cannot be transferred to any subject. For example, giving effective formative feedback on a written task in English would not be the same as the one given on a written problem solving task in math. Kamal and Faraj (2015) argue that when the purpose of writing differs so will text organization (p. 134), and therefore so must the feedback.

5.2 Do the teachers give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom, and if so: How?

Veronica gives feedback as formative assessment on students’ writing, and she focuses her feedback based on the instructions given for the task. Veronica gives an example where her students in year five were practicing the grammatical structures of there is/there are in writing when describing their rooms. Veronica had given the students instructions that expressed that the task should contain the use of there is/there are. Since the instruction
was to focus on grammar in this task, the feedback that Veronica gave was directed towards the grammar. While Cameron (2001) states that grammar teaching at an early age is not beneficial for students language learning, she also acknowledge that students need a solid base in their writing before grammar can be addressed (p. 13; p. 20). Since Veronica teaches students in year five, they might already have obtained a base in their writing that can explain her teaching of grammar.

Further, Veronica believes that it is important that teachers are explicit in conveying what the goals of a task are and what the students are supposed to do. It is then easier for students as well as her as a teacher to know from the beginning what is being assessed within the text. Giving feedback based on a clear criterion or instruction for a task is argued to be an essential part of formative feedback as it is directed towards the task and aims to fill the gap between the students’ current performance and the end goal of the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 84). Even though the purpose of the task was to practice a grammatical structure, not all grammatical errors within the students’ texts were commented on. Veronica does not typically prioritizes comprehensive grammar feedback but rather focuses on positive aspects in the students writing that they can further develop:

I always try to focus on what is good and strengthen that in some way, but those students that had left out there is and there are I just cannot, as they wrote about something else; those I just could not leave as I must point out to them […] you got an instruction and then you have to follow it. Although you get an instruction from IKEA, you cannot put it together as you like because then it will not work.

Her statement suggests that she uses selective feedback that she directs toward the instructions and aims of the task. This is discussed by Lee (2011), who claims that teachers should focus on giving students selective feedback as “…students who produce a large number of errors are likely to be less proficient and, naturally, they will find it difficult to cope with a large amount of error feedback.” (p. 387). This is further described by Andrea, when she expresses that when giving feedback you have to choose different aspects to
focus on. It could be the writing process as well as the language. However, she expresses that she feels that it is more interesting to comment on the process of writing as she believes that that is what will develop the students as writers: “When they write on their own, it should be about how they formulate themselves. They should be able to make themselves understood. And tell as much as possible. Dare to express themselves. So I tend to focus more on content then the technicalities of writing.” As written in the introduction, The Swedish Board of Education [Skolverket] states that “[…] being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the […] written language […]” should be one of the aims of teaching English (p. 32). Another main focus on teaching English to young learners should be getting students to want to write and be confident writers, according to Read (2007, p. 50). It is further highlighted by Cameron (2001) that students need support in focusing on the more important aspects of writing, such as content, rather than grammar as grammar teaching will not be beneficial for learning in an early language learning process (p. 13). That is one reason why effective formative feedback cannot be directed only on grammar but also content, structure and organization of the writing. Andrea continues as she expresses that teachers could make it easy for themselves by focusing on the technicalities of writing but that students will not progress in their learning: “They will not write better environment descriptions [miljöskildringar] when I focus on the technicalities of writing.”

5.3 When do they give feedback?

When effective formative feedback are to be given on a writing process, Kamal and Faraj (2015) argue that feedback should be given during the process of writing several times so that students get several opportunities to use the feedback to revise their texts (p. 134-135). When the students revise their texts, Andrea expresses that during the writing process she gives formative feedback once or twice on how the students can revise their texts. Her explanation suggests that she sees revision as an important part of writing, but it is not clear when she gives this type of formative feedback or how. Sadler (1989) states that feedback needs to be given in forms of loops where the feedback is given and acted upon continuously. Sadler (1989) argues that this is due to that developing intellectual skills such as writing need the practice and support that these loops can provide (p. 119). If feedback is
given once on a text, there is no loop of feedback that the student can use to best progress in their text.

Veronica expresses that she prefers to give feedback at the beginning of the writing process to catch the students early. However, this is not always possible to do during a lesson, as time is restricted: “First you need to give them instruction and start the task, and before everyone has remembered their computer password, 25 minutes have passed and they have written four sentences.” She also adds that if she has time, she tries to give feedback in the middle of the task as well as in the end, but highlights that the feedback in the middle of a task is the most important as it is there she feels she best can scaffold a progression. This tells us that there is some type of loop within Veronica’s feedback, but that her feedback can be restricted due to time constraints.

5.4 What type of feedback is given and why?

Andrea prefers to give oral and informal types of feedback as formative assessment on student writing in the classroom when the students are working on a task:

[…] because they are sitting there and then. And they can receive the feedback from me then and do it then. […] If they get it afterwards, many children feel that when they have written once they are done. So it is an exercise to make them understand that a text is not finished just because you have written it once.

This is also highlighted by Zamel (1983) who argues that unexperienced students do not see writing as a process because they are simply not trained in the strategies of writing as a process (p. 166). Since students do not see writing as a process, they are most likely not to see feedback as a process. That might explain why Andrea feels the need for providing feedback while the students are working on their written tasks and not give the feedback after a draft as the students will not act upon the feedback.

Similar to Andrea, Veronica says that she prefers to give oral feedback on students’ writing as she believes this type of feedback to be most beneficial for students’ learning. However,
she sometimes finds it hard to find time to cover all students during a lesson. She says that due to the lack of time, the number of students, and the amount they have written, she finds it easier to provide written feedback as this can be done outside of the classroom in a more relaxed environment. This therefore becomes an effective form of feedback when time is an issue. Although this is what Veronica believes, Bruno and Santos (2011) argue that written feedback is not easy to provide as it is a slow process that takes time as every individual student’s text is likely to be different and therefore demands different aspects to comments on (p. 118). It is, however, reported by Veronica that even though she sometimes feels the need to provide written feedback it is not preferred as she believes most of the students to be different and have different language abilities and therefore need differentiated feedback, which is in alignment with Bruno and Santos (2011, p. 118). In addition, she also says that students in the years 4-6 are too young to understand written feedback and therefore prefer oral feedback as she can discuss with the students. Discussing feedback is supported in the literature, as Kamal and Faraj (2015) state that it is an aspect that should be included to support the process of writing as it incorporates a perspective to the text that the students might not have had themselves during the writing (p. 134).

Regarding the issue of time when providing effective formative feedback on students’ written tasks, Veronica further explains as a question of organization where teachers need to learn how to focus on the most important aspects and organize these in the right way. Andrea also discusses the aspect of time, but she describes it as a challenge if one wants to provide comprehensive written feedback (Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2012, p. 60) every time. However, her main focus is not to spellcheck each student’s text, and therefore she feels that she can manage the time constraints as it is not a huge issue in the way she has chosen to work. She has chosen to work with selective feedback (Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2012, p. 60) due to the changes in assessment. She says that formative feedback has existed for at least 20 years but that you cannot give the same type of feedback now as you did back then as the view of what writing is has changed: “Before the focus was on spelling and to have capital letters and correct punctuation. And then it was good if, you also could produce a good text. But that was not the main focus.”. This is in alignment with Kamal and Faraj (2015), who discuss the change in the views of the writing process as before writing was
seen as an end-product (p. 131). This therefore effected the ways feedback was given, meaning it was most likely was given in a more summative sense than formative. There is a distinct difference in how the two teachers perceive the challenge of time. Veronica sees it as a challenge to give oral feedback to every student in the classroom during a task. Andrea, on the other hand, sees it as a challenge to provide written feedback, especially if it is comprehensive grammar feedback. Neither of the two teachers expresses that they give comprehensive grammar feedback. Andrea and Veronica give selective feedback, which is supported by Lee (2011, p. 387) and Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 91) to be the more favoured way of giving effective formative feedback since it does not overwhelm the students with errors as well as keeping track of the learning outcome of the task.

5.5 Writing as a Process

As well as effective formative feedback being a process striving towards having students’ progress in their learning, so should writing. Writing is argued by Flower and Hayes (1981) as well as Kamal and Faraj (2015) to include different stages that students go through in the process of writing, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 132), or planning, translating, and reviewing a task (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 369). It is therefore not enough to produce a single draft of a text, get feedback on grammar, to revise and to finally hand in for the teacher to read. This does not support written language learning according to Haiyan and Rilong (2016) as process-based writing is a more desirable approach since it is learner-centred, more demanding for students and therefore provides more learning opportunities (p. 78).

When asking Veronica about the writing process, she mentions aspects of writing rather than stages of writing, which suggests that she does not know what the theories of writing as a process include. However, she reports some factors that can be related to writing as a process. She says that before the students start writing it is important to get inspiration from both teachers and peers. Finding inspiration is a key part in the writing process, as supported by Kamal and Faraj (2015), and by Flower and Hayes (1981). Kamal and Faraj (2015) refer to it as the step of prewriting where the students start to generate their ideas (p.
In addition, Flower and Hayes’ (1981) cognitive process of writing describe it as part of the stage of planning (p. 369). It is not explicit how Veronica works with inspiration within the classroom and if she sees it as part of writing as a process or a way to support language learning. Veronica further reports that finding inspiration is important to do before the students start writing. However, Flower and Hayes (1981) argue that finding inspiration and generating ideas does not necessarily take place in the beginning of a task. Instead, it is a process that the students can return to during the writing as well (p. 373). Further, Veronica does not mention any of the other stages described by Kamal and Faraj (2015) or by Flower and Hayes (1981) when asked how she defines writing as a process. Neither does Andrea, as she interprets the writing process as different stages students go through when learning to write rather than when the students are already writing, and the connection between reading and writing. She says that it is important to her that students get to bathe in English through, for example, reading, speaking and seeing pictures before learning to write. When the students move on to writing, their writing is defined by spelling words as they sound, writing incomplete sentences and using Swenglish. The language then develops by having the students write longer sentences, varying their language, bettering their spelling and grammar, and finally developing strategies for writing. Her answer suggests that she interprets the writing process as the development of the written language instead of the process of writing. She also mentions strategies for writing to come after the development of the language. Zamel (1983), on the other hand, expresses that strategies of writing should be favoured over language structure as this better promotes students’ language learning by exploring, clarifying and reformulating ideas of writing (p. 184; p. 166). However, Andrea does mention strategies of writing to be important as students need different strategies for writing different types of texts. She expresses that there should be a distinct difference between different texts as it is believed today that just because you can write a certain type of text, it does not mean that you can write all types of texts.

As previously mentioned, Andrea gives feedback once or twice on students’ texts, which suggests that she includes some revision when teaching writing in English. However, if a teacher gives formative feedback once on a text, this suggests that the students revise their text once. This is not enough in the process of writing, according to Kamal and Faraj
(2015), as the students need several opportunities to engage in their writing in order to
develop as good writers and further their language learning (p. 131). Providing feedback
once on a student’s written text is not enough (Kamal & Faraj, 2015). Kamal and Faraj
(2015) argue that during the process of drafting formative feedback should be provided in
the form of discussions and comments on essential parts of the text. The students should
then move on to revise their text, and it is not until the process of editing that the students
should correct the language within the text (p. 134-135).

Further, Veronica and Andrea highlight the importance of modelling when scaffolding
language learning, but they do not, once again, refer to it as part of writing as a process.
Veronica argues that modelling is important to give the students a proper structure within
the language that they do not get outside of school, but they need to become writers
themselves. Andrea mentions the role of modelling when letting her students begin their
writing by copying model sentences and using sentence starters. Veronica further mentions
the importance of showing examples of what good writing can include but also what bad
writing can look like as to show contrasts and support ways to structure a text. Sadler
(1989) argues that teachers need to have a clear concept of quality that a task aims to
achieve in order to support students language learning. These qualities must then be passed
on to students so that they become aware of what they are being assessed on and what
qualities the teacher will look for within their works: “In other words, students have to be
able to judge the quality of what they are producing and be able to regulate what they are
doing during the doing of it” (Sadler, 1989, p. 121). However, neither the statements by
Sadler (1989) nor the statements by Veronica and Andrea refer to writing as a process.
Factors such as modelling and scaffolding with examples are important aspects in the
support of language learning (Read, 2007, p. 49), but it is not described as parts or stages in
the theories of writing as a process (Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 131-134; Flower & Hayes,
1981, p. 365-374). This suggests that Andrea and Veronica are well trained in how to
support language learning but not trained in the process-based writing approach. This might
be due to that Veronica’s and Andrea’s education steam from other approaches within
their teaching writing and that they have not been provided with further training to develop their
teaching according to new research and theories of writing.
Even today, most of the primary teacher training programs at universities around Sweden do not provide their students with training in the process-based writing approach (Finnegan & Wärnsby, Personal communication, February 14, 2017). Instead, the teacher training programs highlight other aspects important to the teaching profession, one being formative assessment. Several courses in different subjects within the teaching education program at Malmö University have included training in formative assessment as well as effective formative feedback. Veronica and Andrea both express that they have taken part of training concerning formative assessment and feedback, but none that relates to teaching English. This shows that formative assessment has a greater focus today than writing as a process. However, Kamal and Faraj (2015) argue that feedback and writing are closely connected as both are built on a process that should serve the purpose of moving students forward in their learning. Haiyang and Rilong (2016) emphasize that teachers need proper training about writing as a process in order to use it successfully in the classroom (p. 78). Without proper training, changes within the classroom might seem overwhelming and lead to teachers falling back to what they know and feel comfortable with. This is expressed by Andrea, when she says that teachers need “More time, more education. You also have to realize that it takes time to change a way of working. And you have to give it time. Otherwise, you quit and go back to old habits.” Andrea as well as Veronica has expressed the issue of time when working with writing and effective formative feedback. This must therefore be provided to teachers by their head teacher so that “the staff receive the competence development required to able to carry out their work in a professional manner” (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 21). If teachers have not had the time or education to practice the approach themselves, it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to teach it.

Education within effective formative feedback and writing as a process is vital in the teacher profession of today due to the importance it plays in students’ everyday lives. English surrounds students on an everyday basis, and their needs for formulating themselves and expressing their views and opinions with “confidence and power” are
greater than ever before, according to B. Lundahl (2014, p.180). This is also stated the curriculum to be of focus in the English teaching as it says that:

Through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding […] written English, being able to formulate one’s thinking and interact with others in the […] written language, and the ability to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes and recipients (The Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 32).

Further, B. Lundahl (2014) states that the process of learning to write takes more time than those of speaking and listening (p. 172). This is in accordance with Haiyan and Rilong (2016) who state that writing is a productive skill that demands the writer to be more explicit than he or she would if speaking making writing a greater challenge for students learning English (p. 76).

5.6 Summary

Our findings show that the two teachers’ perceptions and descriptions of effective feedback as formative assessment are similar to the theories by Wiliam (2011, p. 44), Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 87), and Sadler (1989, p. 120). Andrea describes feedback as formative assessment when students are told how they can improve their written work and when teachers use the feedback to scaffold a progress in students’ learning. Veronica as well mentions the role of providing feedback with the purpose to move students forward in their learning by focusing on good aspects within students’ written work that they can further develop rather than focusing on the errors students have made. However, this could result in feedback given on self-level meaning, that is, the feedback is in forms of praise rather than providing information of how to progress in a specific task, which is the least effective type of feedback according to Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 96). Veronica and Andrea explain that they have been influenced by Wiliam’s (2011, p. 44) key strategies when reading his literature, and this can be seen in their answers when Veronica, for example, acknowledges the importance of setting and sharing learning criteria and Andrea when she says she values the feedback and collaboration among the students.
The two teachers do give feedback on students’ written tasks. Veronica expresses that she gives feedback based on the instructions for an individual task. She then uses selective feedback, where she focus on good aspects within students’ written texts that she feels that they can further develop. Andrea gives selective feedback as well and chooses to focus on different aspects within a text and prefers to comment on content rather than grammar as she finds this to more interesting and developing for students as writers. Lee (2011) argues that selective feedback should be the favoured method of use as to not overwhelm students with massive amounts of feedback that students might have difficulties to comprehend (p. 387).

As to the question of when the two teachers give feedback on the writing process, Andrea answers that she gives feedback once or twice during a revision of a written task, but she does not specify when she gives this type of feedback. However, providing feedback once on the writing process is not be enough, as it suggest that there is only one opportunity for students to revise their text. Veronica says that she prefers to give feedback in the beginning, in the middle as well as in the end of a written task if she has time. She highlights that the feedback given in the middle of the task is the most important as this best scaffolds a progression, according to her. Giving feedback several times is argued as an important factor in the writing process, according to Kamal and Faraj (2015, p. 131-134) and Sadler (1989, p. 119) as it gives students several opportunities to revise their work.

Andrea and Veronica report that they prefer to give an oral and informal type of feedback in the classroom when the students are working on a task. Andrea says that the students can use the feedback there and then, and they do not have to feel that they have completed a task before getting feedback from her. Veronica expresses similar thoughts, as she says that oral and informal feedback is preferable as it is more beneficial for students’ learning. However, Veronica expresses the need to sometimes provide written feedback when there is not enough time in the classroom for oral feedback, as written feedback can be done outside the classroom without interruptions. Andrea, on the other hand, believes that written feedback takes more time than oral, particular if it is comprehensive grammar
feedback. Bruno and Santos (2011) argue that written feedback takes time due to the individual feedback that needs to be given based on the students’ different needs (p. 118). This is, however, the reason why Veronica does not prefer to give written feedback as she believes her students to need differentiated feedback and that this is best done in conversations with students rather in writing.

Further, in the interviews the theories of writing as a process (Kamal & Faraj, 2015; Flower & Hayes, 1981) were not recognized by the teachers. Instead of referring to writing as a process as an approach that includes several steps from forming ideas to a finished written product, the teachers talked about how students learn to write and how teachers can support the students’ development of the written language. Veronica explained the importance of working with students’ inspiration before writing, which can in a way be connected to writing as a process as it is argued by Kamal and Faraj (2015, p. 132) as well as Flower and Hayes (1981, p. 369) to be an important part of the process of writing. Andrea describes the writing process as the stages students go through as beginning as writers to someone who controls the language, such as students start spelling words according to how they sound and write incomplete sentences. Students then develop in their written language by writing longer sentences, spelling better, varying their language and progress in their use of strategies for writing. In addition, Veronica and Andrea express the role of modelling, where sample texts are used as a tool to scaffold language learning. However, none of the other stages within writing as a process, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 131-134) or planning, translating and revising (Flower and Hayes, 1981, p. 369), are mentioned by either Andrea or Veronica. Instead, the teachers show knowledge of how to support written language learning in English, but they are not aware of the theories of writing as process. One of the reasons that Veronica and Andrea are not aware of the process-based writing approach could be due to that they have not been trained within it. There exists evidence in both the teachers’ answers and within the teacher training programs around Sweden that writing as a process is not paid enough attention to. Instead, the focus is on training students at the universities and teachers in the field how languages are learnt and how formative assessment should be used. It is, however, not solely the teachers’ responsibility to make sure they are trained according to new research.
They must receive support from their head teachers in ways they can develop their competence, which is clearly expressed in The Curriculum (2011, p. 21). Andrea and Veronica expressed several times during the interviews the will to participate in training within the subject of English. Writing as a process has benefits for students’ learning that cannot be neglected, but it is hard for teachers to teach what they themselves are unaware of (Haiyan & Rilong, 2016, p. 78).
6. Summary and Conclusion

The first research questions that we sought out to answer were *Do teachers give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom? If so, how, when, what kind of feedback and why?* Secondly, we investigated the questions *Do teachers teach writing in English as a process? If so, how? If not why?* The research questions will be answered in this section, and in addition, limitations of the study and further research will be drawn attention to.

Researchers within the field of formative assessment argue that assessment play an important role in students’ learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 88; Sadler, 1989, p. 119; Wiliam 2011, p. 44). Sadler (1989) states that in order to develop intellectual skills feedback is needed as support since these skills cannot simply develop on their own (p. 119). Students need to be scaffolded by teachers and told how to further their learning, for example, how to fill the gap of the students’ current performance and what needs to be achieved to reach the aims of a task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 84). Wiliam (2011) further state that due to that feedback can mediate progression of a task to students makes it a key strategy within formative assessment (p. 44). However, feedback can be given in different ways and therefore have different effects on students’ learning. The most effective formative type of feedback would, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007), be when feedback is given on process-level, meaning that feedback is directed to a specific task and its progress. The least effective type of formative feedback is the one given on self level, meaning that the feedback focuses on the students in forms of praise, but it is not connected to the task at hand (p. 93 and p. 96). The role of effective formative feedback within students’ writing is important as both feedback and writing builds on process. The process of writing is argued to include several steps that build on revision, such as students starting out with forming ideas, drafting these, receiving feedback at different stages in the text so that the text can be further developed (Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 131-134; Flower & Hayes 1981, p. 365-374). With this approach to writing, it is no longer seen as an end-product, but rather a process (Kamal & Faraj, 2015, p. 131). Therefore, writing as a process cannot be
neglected as it is argued to be beneficial for students’ learning as “it is learner-centered, and encourages the students’ full participation” (Haiyan & Rilong, 2016, p. 78).

Findings to the first two research questions Do teachers give feedback on students’ written tasks in a primary EFL classroom? If so, how, when, what kind of feedback and why? shows that the two teachers give feedback on students’ writing. Andrea’s and Veronica’s answers to the question of how the give feedback show that the teachers favour selective feedback. The reasons for this is that Veronica and Andrea wish to focus their feedback on the most important aspects of students’ writing, such as content, following instructions and willingness to write, as they believe that these aspects will develop students’ writing the most. When feedback is given, Kamal and Faraj (2015) argue that effective formative feedback should be given several times during the writing process so that the opportunities for revision are several as well (p. 134-135). The teachers provide feedback once or twice on students’ written tasks, often in the middle of the task. However, this is not enough to develop the students as writers as it does not challenge the students to see writing as a process, where revision is an essential part. Furthermore, the findings to the question regarding what type of feedback is given and why show that the teachers prefer oral and informal feedback that can be given within the classroom when the students are currently working on a task. The reasons for this is due to the teachers feeling that the students can best act upon the feedback there and then and that this type of feedback is the most beneficial for students’ learning. However, due to time restraints during a lesson, Veronica expresses that she sometimes feels the need to resort to written feedback as this can be done outside the classroom. Andrea feels that written feedback takes time and therefore tries to avoid it, especially if it is comprehensive feedback. Both teachers agree that the issues of time is a question of organization and that they need support in ways to best structure their work time.

The third and fourth research questions asked Do teachers teach writing in English as a process? If so, how? If not why? The findings show that the two teachers do not teach writing in English as a process. When asked about the writing process in English, the teachers referred to the process as ways to support and scaffold written language learning.
This shows that the teachers are well trained in the methods of language learning. However, since the teacher are not aware of the theories of writing as a process, this could indicate that they are not trained in this area of writing. We can relate to this, as we have not gotten any proper training within writing as a process during our four years at the teacher-training program. However, during the process of this degree project, it has become clear to us why writing as a process is important within today’s teaching. Regarding this, the curriculum (2011) states that teaching writing should aim towards giving students “the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills” (Swedish Board of Education, 2011, p. 32). This cannot be achieved by teaching writing as an end-product as it does not challenge the students in developing their communicative skills.

6.1 Limitations of the study

This study has been limited by the number of teachers participating. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized, as two teachers do not represent the teacher profession as a whole in Sweden. Another limitation could be the teachers’ lack of training within writing as a process. If the teachers would have been trained in the theories of writing as a process, they would be more likely to use it and could therefore have answered the third and fourth research questions more thoroughly and explicitly.

In addition, our lack of experience within research and interviews as a method could have affected the teachers’ answers, for example, by asking questions a certain way could have led them to answer a question a certain way or perceive a question in another way than we intended. This was apparent when we felt the need to mail three more questions to further develop and clarify the teachers’ perceptions of writing as a process (see Appendix 3). The study and its chosen method could have increased in reliability if we had been more experienced as researchers by, for example, asking clearer follow-up questions. Lastly, there is the possibility that the teachers adapted the answers to what they felt we wanted to hear. Including observations as a method could have either confirmed or contradicted the teachers’ answers.
6.2 Further research

During the interviews, the two teachers expressed the need and wish to gain further training within formative assessment and English teaching. Therefore, it would be interesting to train teachers within writing as a process and then conduct qualitative research of how teachers use and see writing as a process. In addition, further research could also highlight students’ views about effective formative feedback and writing as a process.

As seen in this degree project, there is a need for students as well as teachers to be trained in the forms and uses of writing as process and effective formative feedback. We, as teacher trainees, would not have in-depth gained knowledge about effective formative feedback and writing as a process if we had not conducted this project. Considering the benefits these theories serve for students and teachers, it is impossible to overlook, and they must be acknowledged as vital components in the teacher profession to develop students’ written language.
7. References


Lundahl, Bo. (2014). *Texts, topics and task – teaching English in years 4-6.* Studentlitteratur AB: Lund


Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to Participants

Hejsan,


Därför söker vi nu deltagare för detta examensarbete som undervisar inom engelska i årskurs 4-6 med erfarenhet inom formativ bedömning. Vi kommer att utföra intervjuer där dina tankar och erfarenheter står i fokus. Intervjuerna kommer ske på svenska i ca 30 minuter där vi självfallet anpassar oss efter ditt schema och en plats som passar dig. Vi ser helst att intervjuerna tar plats vecka 6 och 7.

Det material som samlas in kommer att hanteras konfidentiellt och du som medverkar kommer att vara helt anonym. Med det menas att ingen kommer att kunna spåra vårt material tillbaka till dig eller till din arbetsplats. Om du väljer att delta kan du när som helst välja att avbryta intervjun eller ditt deltagande.

Ditt deltagande är av högsta vikt och vi ser potential i denna studie som en avsprångsbräda för vår kommande lärarprofession, framtida studenter eller andra intressenter inom formativ bedömning. Uppsatsen kommer vidare publiceras på Malmö Högskolas databas när den har blivit godkänd. Uppsatsen skickas gärna till de deltagare som önskar en kopia.

Vi ser gärna att du svarar senast 5/2 2017 om du önskar att delta.

Med Vänlig Hälsning,

Jonna Johansson & Marie Nilsson

Vi nås med fördel via e-mail eller telefon:

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## Appendix 2: Interview Guide

| Kunskapsbakgrund | Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare i årskurs 4-6?  
|                  | Hur länge har du undervisat i engelska?  
|                  | Hur skulle du beskriva feedback som formativ bedömning?  
|                  | Har du tagit del av någon form av utbildning/fortbildning kring formativ bedömning?  
|                  | Följdfråga: Berördes då formativ bedömning i engelskundervisningen?  
| Feedback som formativ bedömning | Hur använder du dig av feedback i din bedömning av elevtexter?  
|                  | Följdfrågor: Vad ger du feedback på?  
|                  | Varför ger du denna typ av feedback?  
|                  | När ger du feedback?  
|                  | Vilken typ av texter ger du feedback på?  
|                  | Ser du några hinder/svårigheter med att  
|                  | (Utbildning, fortbildning, åsikter)  
|                  | (Muntlig, skriftlig, grammatik, stavning, innehåll, struktur, prioriteringar)  
|                  | (Process, slutprodukt, texttyper, utmaningar, svårigheter)  

| Sektion: Skriftlig språkinlärning | Frågor: 
|---|---|
| Hur anser du att språkundervisning i skriftlig engelska bör organiseras? 
Hur anser du att elever lär sig att skriva ett nytt språk? 
Hur skulle du definiera effektiv feedback på elevtexter? | (Språkundervisning, skrivinlärning) |

| Sektion: Kollegialt lärande och utveckling | Frågor: 
|---|---|
| Finns det ett aktivt samarbete/kollegialt lärande kring formativ bedömning på din arbetsplats? 
Följdfråga: 
Kan du beskriva detta samarbete? 
Vad anser du behövs för att på ett, enligt dig, optimalt sätt använda dig av feedback som formativ bedömning på elevtexter? | (Utveckling, riktlinjer, åsikter) |
Appendix 3: Additional Questions

1. Vilka olika steg anser du ingår i elevers skrivprocess?
2. Hur arbetar du med de olika stegen i elevers skrivprocess?
3. Hur många gånger ger du feedback på en elevtext?