Degree Project in English Studies and Education
15 Credits, Second Cycle

“We are not going to hide what they are going to learn”
- A Study about Rubrics for Speaking Skills in The English Classroom

“Vi ska inte gömma vad de ska lära sig”
- En studie om lärandematriser för talförmågan i det engelska klassrummet

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Abstract

A rubric specifically for speaking skills was recently implemented and practiced in an English classroom for grade 6, in a school in the south of Sweden. The predetermined effected results of how the rubric works is debated among many schools and researchers, but no research have been done on the actually effects specifically in this area recently. Therefore, the overall aim for this study is to analyse how this specific tool for the spoken language learning works in practice. The study includes theory and previous research, which will be presented and moreover discussed in relation to the findings. Semi-structured interviews will be used and the participants are two teachers who taught year 6 at the same school in a city in the south of Sweden; both used the rubric in the English classroom. I investigated why and how it was implemented and used in the English classroom. Moreover, I answered the questions of what kind of rubric was used; and by comparing the rubric to the knowledge requirement in the syllabus, I determined how it outlined the knowledge requirements. In addition, by analysing the teachers’ answers, I investigated how the rubric affected the students’ learning and how it facilitated the learners’ self-awareness of their language development. The conclusion demonstrates that the rubric for speaking skills is beneficial for the majority of the students, but it has a negative effect on the students who are on a lower knowledge level than the rubric includes.

Keywords: formative assessment, rubrics, scaffolding, sociocultural perspective, speaking strategies, spoken language learning, the affective filter hypothesis, visible learning, and ZPD
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Introduction

During my almost 4 years at Malmö University studying the program Grundskollärare 4-6, I have gained experiences from my teacher training in the field (VFU) in south of Sweden. Especially, I have gained experiences relating to the area of formative assessment in the English classroom, moreover I have practiced different types of formative assessment methods. I have seen that the English teachers at my VFU-school struggle and strive for reaching the goals of the school’s commitment plan, which has a focus on formative assessment with the goal that all students will at least reach the grade E. To reach the passing grade E requires that the students have passing grades in all four parts of the English subject: speaking, reading, writing and listening. The latest method used by the school for the English subject are rubrics, and one specific rubric this study will focus on is the rubric for speaking skills. In order for all students to reach the passing grade E.

Statistics retrieved from Skolverket (2017) report that 9,4 percent of all students in year 6 failed in the English subject, which is seen as a major problem even at my VFU-school. I have seen students crying when they received a failing grade from the speaking National test in English. This came as a shock to many as they did not think they lacked the necessary skills to get a passing grade. According to Skolverket (2017), assessment bases for the national test for speaking is based on the knowledge requirements. In order for the students to reach the minimum passing grade (E), they have to achieve the following:

In oral and written production, pupils can express themselves simply and understandably in phrases and sentences. To clarify and vary their communication, pupils can work on and make some simple improvements to their communications. In oral and written interaction, pupils can express themselves simply language of a simple nature and from different media and in a relevant and effective way use the material chosen in their own production and interaction. (Skolverket, 2011, p. 36-37)

Moreover, I have noticed that silence occurs when the teacher introduces a speaking activity in the English classroom. From my experiences and observations in the English classroom at my VFU-school, as well as, at other schools in Sweden, there are just a few of the students who actually speaks English and are trying to improve their speaking level. From what I have
seen and heard, I think this is because the students do not know what strategies to use, they do not get enough support, and they do not know what they should focus on. I have seen that this makes the students unsecure, frustrated, anxious and unmotivated.

Hattie (2009) argues that one of the most important factors for learning is that the students have a self-awareness of their grades in order to be able to affect their learning process. Hattie (2009) and Wiliam (2013) both agree that students fail because they do not get their knowledge development visualised. Consequently, they are not able to affect their learning progress. Wiliam (2013) argues that students without completed passing grades are at a higher risk of not finishing school; this in turn, may result in a vicious circle which leads to a future of low employments. Furthermore, low-paying jobs result in poor economics and financial position, which in turn leads to health problems (Wiliam, 2013). According to a study made by OECD (2010), only 75 percent of the population in USA who quit school before high school have good health conditions. Even though, these results are not from Sweden, we can draw parables between USA and Sweden. The Swedish Public Health Institute states that the educational level is strongly connected to health conditions and socioeconomically standards, and that a higher educational level contributes to a longer life (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2017).

However, at my last VFU the target aim gained from the commitment plan of the school was to implement a new formative assessment method, in order to support the students to reach the grade E. The school’s commitment plan was based on Wiliam’s (2013) research about formative assessment, which is feedback that tends to lead the learning process forward. In fact, the formative assessment method which was tried now, included four different rubrics for the English classroom focusing on the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Moreover, the idea of using the rubrics comes from Alm (2015), who argues why it is important to visualise the learning focus for the students in order to let them see, follow, and affect their own learning process. I found that the theory and the expected effects about the rubrics is clear for all the English teachers, but I wonder if the practice with the rubrics will reach the expected results. According to Wiliam (2013), the students must be the owners of their own learning and be able to affect their learning. Moreover, Gibbons (2009) states that the teacher must use methods to scaffold the students along the learning process. Upon this, Alm (2015) states that the rubrics visualise the students’ learning progress and lead them along their learning process. Furthermore, the school believes that using rubrics as a
formative assessment method will help the students to pass the subject English. When the new formative assessment method was implemented at the English lesson during my last VFU period, I wondered if the students understood how to use the rubrics; because if they do not, the whole idea of the rubrics is failing.

Skolverket’s statements relating the rubric for speaking skills

This section lists the most essential points by the Syllabus of English, including speaking skills and strategies. Since, the rubric studied in this study focuses on the speaking skills and strategies for communication. Skolverket (2011) states that communication skills “cover confidence in using the language and the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems when language skills by themselves are not sufficient” (p.32). With focus on the speaking and communication skills, as well as, the strategies, I will summarise what SNAE (Swedish National Agency for Education) (2011a) states about this area:

SNAE (2011a) states that the English subject should include:

- Language strategies to understand and make yourself understood when language skills are lacking, such as through reformulations.
- Language strategies to participate and contribute to discussion, such as questions, and phrases to confirm understanding (p.34).

SNAE (2011a) states that teaching in English should essentially give pupils the opportunities to develop their ability to:

- use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood (p.32).

SNAE (2011a) present that students to develop:

- the ability to use different strategies to support communication and solve problems
when language skills by themselves are not sufficient (p.32).

Aim and research question

The overall aim for this study is to analyse how the specific rubric for spoken language learning is used and how it works in practice. By interviewing teachers in year 6 who uses the rubric for speaking skills in their English classroom, the focus will be to find out how the students perceive and are affected by this specific tool. Moreover, the study also explores if the expected results of the rubric meet the actual result in practice.

My research questions are as follows:

- What kinds of rubric for speaking skills is used in the English classroom?
- Why is the rubric for speaking skills used?
- How is the rubric for speaking skills used in the classroom?
- How does the rubric for speaking skills outlines the knowledge requirements for the speaking skills in order for the students to understand?
- How does the rubric for speaking skills affect the students’ spoken English language learning and development?

Theory and Literature Review

My study is based on the sociocultural perspective with a focus on the students’ understanding of their own knowledge development. Concepts I will use as a part of the theory are rubrics, language learning, speaking strategies, sociocultural perspective and ZPD, visible learning, formative assessment, scaffolding and the affective filter hypothesis.

Rubrics

This section will bring up explanations from different researchers. In order to understand what rubrics are CARLA (Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition) (2018)
compare rubrics to rating scales. Brookhart (2013), explains about rubrics as a tool for both for summative and formative assessment. while Alm (2015) brings up examples of rubrics which works as formative assessment tools. Even though, rubrics are seen differently by different researchers, this part of the text will explain rubrics more in detail to give a better understanding of what rubrics are.

It is impossible to directly translate the English concept “rubrics” into Swedish, because within the Swedish language there are two different definitions of rubrics. The first one is “bedömningsmatris” and focuses on the rubric for summative assessment. The second one is “lärandematriser” which means rubrics for learning (Alm, 2015).

Brookhart (2013) states, “A rubric is a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria” (p.4). Rubrics visualises the learning criteria, as well as, the performance for the students to be able to follow their own work and their learning process. Moreover, rubrics are created as tables which introduce criteria in rows, where each column describes different levels of performance. Brookhart (2013), argues that the students will be able to assess their own work by the use of rubrics, and that the rubric should rather describe a judge the performance. Over all, Brookhart (2013) mentions four different types of rubrics, which are holistic rubrics and analytic rubrics, as well as, general rubrics and task-specific rubrics. Brookhart (2013), explains that the rubrics are organised by two categories, furthermore, each category include two types of rubrics. The first category focus on the criteria, if the rubric includes all criteria it is a holistic rubric, wheatear if it only focusses on one criterion it is an analytic rubric. The next category is weather the rubric is task-specific and only applicable for one task, or if it is a general rubric and can be used for many different assignments over a longer time. Moreover, rubrics can be used for both summative and formative assessment.

**General rubrics**

General rubrics can also be called generic rubrics, they are the same type of rubric but named differently on different sources. CARLA (2018) defines the rubric as generic, while Brookhart (2013) explains the rubric as general. However, in this text the rubric of this kind will be named as general. General rubrics focus on a knowledge or skill, and can be used several
times to different kinds of tasks (Brookhart, 2013). For example, a general rubric can focus on strategies for speaking. Where the first level is for the students to use one strategy to solve a problem, the second level is to use more than one strategy, and the third level is to choose one suitable strategy out of many strategies to solve a problem. This means, that the general rubrics can be repeatedly used over a longer time and focus on developing one specific ability. Moreover, the general rubric tells the students what a strong performance means regardless of the task, it gives the students the understanding that a grade and a good work is based on more than just one task (CARLA, 2018). According to Brookhart (2013), “the general approach encourages students to think about building up general knowledge and skills rather than thinking about school learning in terms of getting individual assignments done.” (p.10).

Task-specific Rubrics

According to Brookhart (2013), a task-specific rubric is simply just as it sounds like: specified for a task. Task-specific rubrics are created to suit one task or assignment and include certain criteria adapted to the task. For example, a task-specific rubric can list what the students have to include to write a specific text type or tells the students what facts they have to use for a presentation. Brookhart (2013) states, that these kinds of rubrics are less time consuming to write and easier for the students to understand than general rubrics. On the other hand, the advantages of task-specific rubrics are temporary, because it can only be applicable to one single task. They have a summative approach, because it tells the students exactly what to do and cannot be applied for more than one task, which means that it is hard to use the rubric as a formative tool.

Holistic Rubrics

The holistic rubric works as an overall tool used to assess all criteria from one subject, in only one rubric. Advantages for the holistic rubrics are that they are favourable for summative assessment and requires less time to create. However, the disadvantages with holistic rubrics are that they do not illustrate the student what to do next, in other words, it is not usable for formative assessment.
Analytic Rubrics

Brookhart (2013) explains, that every analytic rubric focus on one criteria each. Even though, the analytic rubric requires more time to create, the advantages are that the students can connect the analytic rubric to an assignment and use it as a formative assessment tool. Brookhart (2013), argues that the analytic rubrics are the most advantageous kind of rubrics for most purposes. They are easier to apply to instructions and can be used both for formative assessment and summative assessment, because of their specification on one criteria at the time. When grading, it is useful for both the teacher and the students, the grade will not come as a surprise for the students, because they have seen their progress through a process, and the grade will be based on the outcome of the rubric. Moreover, it is beneficial for the teacher when grading because the rubric gives them information about where they are in every criterion that is being graded.

Speaking Strategies

According to Börjesson (2012) strategies for the English language learning are tools one can use to learn a new language, in other words, different methods to learn how to communicate in a new language. Börjesson (2012) states that there are three main language strategies; the metacognitive strategies, the cognitive strategies, and the socio-affective strategies. Firstly, metacognitive strategies refer to strategies about how students get through the different steps of planning, doing and evaluating their own work. Secondly, cognitive strategies are methods about how the students work with, for example analysing, problem solving and processing. Moreover, it is about coordinating, associating and connect new information to what they already know, for example write notes while they work. Thirdly, the socio-affective strategies are about the strategies used in a social context and in interaction with others. For example, listen to each other, ask questions and ask a friend for help, in fact, methods to use in actual interaction for communication in spoken language (Börjesson, 2012).

Formative Assessment and Visible Learning

Wiliam (2013) maintains that formative assessment aims to lead the learning process forward rather than summarise what the students already know through the use of summative assessment. However, it is not as simple as that, according to Wiliam (2013), formative assessment is a concept which has two different definitions. The first definition implies that
formative assessment is all different types of feedback created to support the students, in order to help them to reach the next level of their knowledge process. In this case, the focus is on their knowledge process in spoken language. The other aspect describes formative feedback as the definition of the whole process that leads the learning forward. Wiliam (2013) states that formative assessment includes both the definitions, one must not leave one out. Wiliam (2013) ensures that no one mistaken formative assessment as a tool. Formative assessment is a process and includes all sorts of tools and support to lead the learning forward (Wiliam, 2013). In addition, Wiliam (2013) states that the goal of formative assessment is not to lead the students to an equal goal. He argues that it is unreasonable to have one and the same goal for all students, because students are not exactly alike. Instead, the goal should be extracted to a horizontal line, as a result, the goal would be spread out in order for all students to reach their goal.

Basically, to be able to use formative assessment successfully there are three stages that the students have to be aware of. Overall, formative assessment tends to develop a skill, ability or knowledge. Firstly, the students themselves have to know where they are right now in their learning process, and in this case in their spoken language process. The learning process must be visualised for the students, in order for them to be able to affect the process. Secondly, the students need to see where they are going and what they have to do to reach the next step in their learning process to develop their spoken language. Thirdly, the students have to know what they should do to develop their spoken language and to get further in their learning process (Wiliam, 2013).

Wiliam (2013) explains that the students must be able to own their own learning and use self-assessment to develop their knowledge. With this, Wiliam (2013) means that the students must take responsibility and be at the heart of the learning process. Hattie (2009) summarizes the most important contributing factors of what affects the students’ knowledge development. Specifically, the result from his research shows that students’ self-estimate of grades is one important factor for successful learning. Visible learning and formative assessment goes hand in hand. Hattie (2009) argues, that the students have to see their own learning, as well as having an understanding of their own development to be able to affect their own learning. Wiliam (2013) agrees with Hattie’s words, and states that it motivates students to perform
better in school if they get the possibility to see, and be able to affect their own learning process.

**Scaffolding**

Scaffolding bases in Vygotsky’s theory, which describes that learning occur in a social context by dint of support (Lundgren, Säljö & Liberg, 2014). To describe what scaffolding is, Gibbons (2009) draws parables to a house construction. The builder has to build a scaffolding around the house before it is ready and can stand on its own. Similarly, the teacher has to scaffold the students through their learning process by using different tools and methods. Meanwhile, the building is being built it is getting more stable and the builder is able to successively lose some of the scaffolding. Likewise, as the students develop and are getting more comfortable with what they are learning, the teacher is able to scaffold the students less. The goal is for the students to be as stable as the building, but similar to the building they need the scaffolding in order to do so. Gibbons (2009) uses Mariani’s (1997) tablet; Four zones of teaching and learning to describe how to create successful scaffolding (figure 1). The goal is to reach the zone of proximal development, in order to do so, the teacher has to expose the students to high challenge together with high support. If the task is too difficult and the support limited it will result in frustration and the student will feel anxious. The students will become bored if both the support and challenge are too low. If the scaffolding is high but the challenge is low, the students will feel comfortable and safe but they will not reach the ZPD, in other words, they will not develop their learning.
According to Gibbons (2009), the teachers have to create activities which force the students to speak, because it is through the spoken interaction that the students will develop their language. In addition, it is important to be aware of that the productive speech process requires a conscious planning beforehand, it does not appear by itself. Everything from how the teacher respond to the students in the spoken interaction, to how the activities and group works are created scaffold the students’ second language learning, if the scaffolding is done successfully. Moreover, it is the teacher’s responsibility to scaffold the students through different methods. Rubrics is one way of scaffolding where the students themselves are able to follow their speaking progress, see where they are right now and what is needed to get to the nest column, in other words, what is needed to develop their spoken language. Gibbons (2009) states, that we teach and learn a second language through spoken interaction. The language that the students meet in the classroom has a great impact on their language development, as well as their self-esteem. According to Gibbons (2009), the second language is developed through spoken interaction between students, as well as between students and teachers. Gibbons (2009) argues, that the teacher has to use scaffolding in order for the to create successful lessons for the students. Gibbons (2009) argues that it is significant to concretise the goals so that the students easily can understand what they should do, in particular, simplify concepts in order for the students to understand.

Figure 1 Four Zones of Teaching and Learning (adapted from Mariani 1997; Gibbons 2009)
Method

The choice of participants

The study will include two interviews with English teachers in grade 6 of mine VFU-school of mine. Both of the teachers currently work in year 6 but have different professional experience; T1 has worked as a teacher for 3 years, and T2 for 9 years. The limited number of interviewed teachers is because of two reasons. Firstly, because of the reason to have participants who uses exactly the same rubric in order to analyse the different perspectives of the same material. I emailed a request of participation to all English teachers in year 4-6 in the school, but I only received two answers. However, after the interviews I realised that the data would be enough for my study. Secondly, the goal is to get a deep contextual understanding in a limited area rather than a wider understanding of the rubric, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. The conclusion will not be applicable to all other English classes in Sweden using rubrics, but it will give the specific school a deeper understanding about the use of rubrics for speaking skills for this certain age group in this area of Sweden. Furthermore, I have made the decision to interview teachers. The teachers’ perceptions about the students’ understanding of the rubrics, will result in data with secondary information. However, we cannot forget that the teachers are educated professionals and know their students well. The teachers have the background information and knowledge about the aim of the commitment plan and will have a deeper understanding about the subject. Moreover, they will understand concepts used in the interview. Interviews with teachers will hopefully result in a more qualitative study. Furthermore, the time limitation of my study has affected this option. Interviews with students request the guardian’s permission, which means that I have to hand out forms with information and the students must hand me their guardian’s signature before the interviews. The decision of interviewing teachers instead of students will give me more time for analysing the data, which may result in a better discussion and conclusion.

Background

The teachers’ backgrounds

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<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Specific responsibility</th>
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</table>
The teachers’ current employments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade they teach</th>
<th>Subjects they teach</th>
<th>Classes they teach English</th>
<th>Minutes they teach English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Social science and English</td>
<td>1 class including 15 students</td>
<td>45 minutes x2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Swedish and English</td>
<td>3 classes including 60 students in total</td>
<td>60 minutes x6</td>
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**Comfort selection**

The selection method is comfort selection, which means that the selected participants are already known by the researcher, or as a coincidence happen to be someone suitable for the study. In this case, the comfort selection is chosen because I knew a school which uses this specific rubric for spoken language learning in the English classroom. According to Bryman (2011) there are disadvantages with using comfort selection because it makes is impossible to generalise the results to another population. Nevertheless, comfort selection is advantageously because I can ensure that the school uses the rubric as a part of their commitment plan; in addition, I know that the teacher who is participating in my study is an active user of the rubric. Bryman (2011) argues that it is acceptable to use the comfort selection if it gives the researcher a possibility to collect data by a specific selection of respondents, which it is in my case. Beforehand, I knew that the participating teachers from the target school used rubrics in the English classroom. It is an advantage that I could ensure that both teachers had previous knowledge about rubrics. Furthermore, I knew that the school and the teachers used both Wiliam’s (2013) research about formative assessment, as well as, Alm’s (2015) book.
“Lärandematriser: att få eleven att förstå”. It was an advantage for me reading that material in order to gain an understanding about the background to the rubrics before the interviews. The language used for the interviews was English. When misunderstandings appeared, I translated concepts into Swedish in order for the teachers to understand. The teachers had English as their second language which affected the interviews. Repeatedly, I noticed that the teachers had a lack of concepts, which led the teachers to explain more thoroughly and give examples. The interview answers would have included more concepts and less explanations, if the Swedish language would have been used for the interviews. However, interviews in Swedish would have resulted in translated data, which would not have been the teachers own words, and include misunderstandings if the language was translated incorrectly. Moreover, the thoroughly explanations and given examples contributed to a visualised picture of incidents in the English classroom.

Qualitative method

Based on the book of Alan Bryman (2011), named Social Research Methods I choose to use the qualitative method. Criticism towards this type of qualitative method states that it is impossible to generalize the results for a whole population or on other environments because of the limited amount of included individuals in the study. In fact, the quantitative method means that more individuals would have participated, which would have given a more generalizable result. However, the limited time frame would have resulted in shorter answers; moreover, I would have had to structure the interviews and it would have led to more superficial answers which are more controlled by me as a researcher (Bryman, 2011). The aim of using the qualitative method is to reach a deeper contextual understanding, rather than get a wider understanding of the rubric. According to Bryman (2011), it is a greater risk that qualitative methods give more subjective results than the quantitative methods give. The aim of this study is not to prove advantages or disadvantages about the use of rubrics in the education. In fact, the aim is to gain a true result about how the students perceive the use of rubrics.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used for the both interviews. Semi-structured interviews
include a certain amount of listed questions, but are not necessary asked in the chronological order. Instead, the questions can be repositioned if it falls natural in the conversation. Follow-up questions are added to receive a deeper answer or to get a wider understanding of the participants opinion. The questions themselves are open, with the aim to receive open, wide and true answers. In other words, they are not created in order to get simple; “yes” or “no” answers. The respondents are English teachers who teach English as a second language at the same school. After the first interview, I limited the amount of questions for the next interview because I realised that some questions were not necessary. The first, and second lists of questions is seen in appendix 2 and appendix 3. Both the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The first interview was done in the classroom of the T1, while the second interview with T2 was done over skype because of geographical circumstances. The choice of the classroom made us interrupted once, and the skype interview made one inference; this may have affected the result. The interviews were done with one week interval and lasted around one hour. Moreover, I used open questions for the interview to avoid including personal values in the questions. I had a neutral approach from the beginning of the study in order to get a credible result which symbolises the reality. The hypothesis was not predetermined; it was created among the process according to the structure of the grounded theory. My indication was to be critical to the rubrics and through the students’ interpretations found out both advantages and disadvantages about the rubric for speaking skills.

The commitment plan of the school

The school I have chosen to investigate has a commitment plan which includes the use of formative assessments methods to develop students’ knowledge level in different subjects, including English. A commitment plan is created out of a school’s previous results and previous work in general. The aim is to find development areas and work formative to achieve an even more successful school. Based on Wiliam’s (2013) research and Alm’s (2015) book about rubrics, the teachers at my VFU-school have been given the task to use rubrics in order to help the students to be aware of their own learning progress and become owners of their own learning. As I have been a positive user of the rubric during my VFU, I want to deepen my knowledge about it and gain a critical eye in order to reach a higher profession. This is a great opportunity for me to learn about the students’ interpretations and get another perspective of the rubric before I use it in my future profession as a teacher. I hope the result of this study will give teachers and myself an insight of how the students understand the rubric. Moreover, I hope this information will help myself in my future profession, as well as,
give teachers the students’ perspectives, in order to help teachers to develop the work with the formative assessment work which include rubrics.

The rubrics for the English subject

The rubrics used in the target school are made by Alm (2015) and implemented in the English classroom as a part of the schools’ commitment plan. There are in total four different rubrics used in the school, which have a focus on one language skill: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Out of these four skills, I have chosen to analyse the rubric for the speaking skill made by Alm (2015). In this text, the rubric with focus on the speaking skill will be named as RL (appendix 1). RL is the same rubric as the participating teachers use in the English classroom.

According to Alm (2015), the rubric includes a reformulation of the knowledge requirements, which are divided into three different difficulty levels. Alm (2015) states that the reformulation is done in order for the students to understand them. Moreover, the requirements are divided in two parts within the RL, the left column states what the students should learn and the level columns describe how the students should learn it. To describe the structure, it is divided in four columns horizontally and in three columns vertically. The rubric is written in Swedish and the highest column to the left says “I…”, it follows by an explanation in the column under where it is written “SPEAK ENGLISH”. If the students continue reading horizontally the rubric tells them what to focus on, step by step. Moreover, the learning progress direction is visualised by arrows. The bottom column to the left says, “The student can express themselves…” and the sentence follows by three different words, in three different columns, and the words are “Simple”, “Clearly”, and “Coherently”. The words summarise each step which follows in the arrows’ pointing direction. In in the same vertical column above the first word “Simple”, it is explained what the student has to present to reach that step. Moreover, the same is for the following words “Clearly” and “Coherently”. The RL has two focuses which are how the student speak and what strategies the student use, and the focus for this study will be on strategies.

According to Alm (2015), the aim of the RL is to visualise, as well as, concretise the knowledge requirements from the syllabus and connect it to tasks in order to give the students
an understanding of what to learn. Alm (2015) declares that the RL is written to students, comparing to the syllabus’s summative English rubric for grade 6 which he states is written in order for teachers to use. Through its concretisation it tells the students what to focus on during the lesson to develop their knowledge. Furthermore, the conformation of the rubric is created to simplify how to read and understand it, in order to follow the spoken language development. Moreover, Alm (2015) discusses whether the RL should be used as a summative assessment tool. His conclusion is that RL can be used as a summative assessment tool for grading for a final grade, but not for single tasks or assignments. This is because it has a negative effect on students’ learning and motivation by grading single tasks. However, he argues that the main aim is that RL should has a formative approach and be used for learning through with.

Analysis of the data collection
Firstly, I found themes out of the result connected to the research questions. Secondly, I applied theory and previous research to the result any compared it in the discussion. I added more to the result part from the interviews when it was necessary to have a wider knowledge about any of the teachers’ perspective. Unnecessary data from the result part was deleted, because it was not connected to any research and unappropriated for the aim. I excluded repetitions of words and stumbles, such as stammer and fillers for example, “hm” or “eh”, because of their impropriety of the context.

Ethical considerations
According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002), it is of importance to consider the ethical aspects towards the participants of a study. In order to ensure cover of the participant’s identity Vetenskapsrådet (2002) mentions four different conditions one must take into account. Firstly, the information condition, which states that the participants of the study must receive all important information about the study. In order to follow that condition, I emailed necessary information about the study beforehand. In addition, I explained what their participating would mean for the study. Even though the participants did not get the questions before the interview, in order to avoid prepared answers that the teachers may have thought I expected, or answers based on the expected results of the commitment plan. The second condition is the permission condition, which states that participation of the study must be
optional. I made it clear for the teachers that their participation was optional first by email and then before the interview started. Moreover, I informed the teachers that they could cancel the interview, or quit being a part of the study if they felt it necessary. Thirdly, the confidential condition implies that personal information about the participants, as well as, the school and mentioned people in the interviews must be anonymous. All names included in the study are fictitious, and information regarding any recognition factors will be left out. The fourth condition, the utilisation condition demonstrates that the data of the study must only be used in research contexts. None of the information about the participants or the processed data can be used for other purposes than research.

Result and Discussion

This part will present the background information about the teachers. The information is presented in columns, in order to give the reader a clear picture of who they are, as well as, the differences and similarities between them. On account to the ethical considerations, the names of the teachers will be anonymous and changed to Teacher 1 (T1) and Teacher 2 (T2). Secondly, the result and discussion will be demonstrated. The two parts are organised together in order to avoid repetition and to make it easier for the reader to follow the study’s findings. The result and discussion will be categorised in relation to the research questions which are as follows; What kind of rubric for speaking skills is used in the English classroom? Why is the rubric for speaking skills used? How is the rubric for speaking skills used in the classroom? How does the rubric for speaking skills outline the knowledge requirements for the speaking skills in order for the students to understand? and How does the rubric for speaking skills affect the students’ spoken English language learning and development?

What kind of rubric for speaking skills is used in the English classroom?

This part of the text will bring up the results of the interviews with the teachers. Furthermore, in the discussion, it will compare the teachers’ perspectives of the RL research about rubrics to previous research. Moreover, it will analyse and discuss the strategies used within the lessons with RL.
The rubric used was made by Alm (2015), and copies were handed out to the teachers. All the English teachers were assigned to practice the rubric in their own classroom. Furthermore, they were to bring their experience to the English group and evaluate the rubric together. The aim was to develop the rubric in order to make it more suitable and beneficial for their students to meet the school’s goals. Firstly, T1 perceived the RL as the same as a summative rubric for grading, but T1 understood that the two rubrics differed after discussion with other colleagues and information from the principals. Both T1 and T2 referred to the principals, who stated that the rubric should be used rather as a formative assessment tool than a summative tool. T2 clarified that one must not confuse the RL with a summative assessment tool. Moreover, T2 argued that there was a risk that it would pressure the students if the rubric would be used as a summative grading scale.

Brookhart (2013) and CARLA (2018) stated that general rubrics can be applied to more than one task. This was supported by the teachers’ explanations about the RL. The teachers stated that the rubric was used for many tasks, over a longer time of period. According to Brookhart, an analytic rubric focuses on only one criterion, while a holistic rubric focus on all criteria. Each rubric used in the target school focuses on only one skill, which means that the rubrics are rather analytic than holistic and is specifically divided into four different rubrics to suit one skill; the four skills are the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skill.

However, CARLA (2018) brings up advantages and disadvantages about both analytic and general rubrics. Positive outcomes of analytic rubrics are that they give the students useful feedback, show individuals what criteria that is most important to focus on, and by using the same rubric repeatedly the students are able to see their progress by comparing the differences over time. Disadvantages are that the narrow focus on only one skill or ability can cause that other skills or abilities to be ignored and not encouraged. Furthermore, it may confuse the students because the analytic rubrics do not give the right picture of the whole performance. The advantages with general rubrics are that they can be used for many different tasks and assignments. Moreover, it will visualise the learning development; and RL supports the students’ self-evaluation, since it can be used over a longer period of time for different tasks but with a focus on the same skill or ability. Furthermore, it gives the students an understanding that a grade is based on more than just one task, as well as a real perspective that good work is much wider than one activity. The disadvantages are that it is harder to
apply the general rubric to the task, and it reacquires more practice in order to learn how to use the general rubrics.

T1 argued that the goal for the teacher group of English was to develop a more clear and specific rubric in order to make it easier for the students to understand. Firstly, T1 stated that the goal was to develop the rubric in order to make it more task-specific. However, when I asked whether T1 meant a clearer general rubric or a task-specific, T1 answered that it depended on the skill. By comparing this to Brookhart’s (2013) and CARLA’s (2018) research, it could either mean that T1 stated that the teacher group strived to create a task-specific rubric rather than a general one, or just a more specific and clearer general rubric. However, both teachers argued that the RL was too difficult for the students to understand as it is constructed by Alm (2015). My perception of T1’s answer is to strive to create a general rubric applicable to many tasks but easier for the students to understand.

Why is the rubric for speaking skills used?

This section will bring up the teachers’ reasons of why the rubric for speaking skills is used in the English classroom. Furthermore, the teachers’ perspectives will be discussed in relation to previous research.

According to the teachers, RL was used as a beneficial method for the students’ language learning. T2 clarified that the rubric which the English teachers used was created by Alm (2015) and given to the teachers as a part of the commitment plan of the school. T1 explained that all the English teachers at the school met one hour, once a week at a special meeting which intended to develop the education of the English subject. This English group was a part of the school’s commitment plan, and it aimed to give the students the best possible conditions for their English language learning. According to T2, the goal of using the rubrics was for all the students to get a passing grade and manage the English subject. T2 clarified that the whole school strived for the same goal, which was established by the school principals and a part of the school’s commitment plan. Currently, the focus was on how they could develop the rubrics. Both the teachers thought that the RL would be beneficial for the students’ spoken language development, which was supported by the principals and the aim of the school’s commitment plan.
T1 argued about another reason why they used the RL. That main reason for T1 was to make the students feel safe. According to T1, it was important to create a sense of security for the students in the classroom; in order to do so, the students must feel that they are in control of their learning. The control would generate a safe feeling that would make the students challenge themselves. Moreover, T1 declared that the rubric worked as a contributing factor to establish a safe environment. In addition, the support from the RL generated the students daring to challenge themselves.

T1 stated;

“[… I think that when they think that they are in control they feel safe and when you feel safe you want to you know you can challenge yourself in another way. You can try to do things that you have never done before and of course you would be a little bit afraid that you will fail but it will not be as terrible to fail […]”

Firstly, the teachers describe that the RL is used in order for the students to develop their spoken language. Krashen (2009) discusses the concept learning and explains that a person either learns or acquires a language. The differences are that language learning occurs in consciousness, while language acquisition develops in an unawareness of the actual language development. By drawing parables between the teachers’ statements and Krashen’s (2009) hypothesis about language development, the conclusion can be drawn that lessons with the RL creates language learning rather than language acquisition. The RL visualises the learning process for the students, and they get an awareness of their development. However, Krashen (2009) advocates, likewise Skolverket (2011), that the English acquisition should occur within meaningful tasks, for example games. The tasks applied to the work with the Rubric are described by the teachers as speaking activities such as games that engages the students. This means that the students may even acquire the English language through the activities. Moreover, they are learning the language through the support of the rubric.

The second statement of why the RL is used is described by T1 as a way to make the students feel safe. T1 explains that the students use the RL as a support to develop their spoken language learning. In relation to Gibbons’ (2009) statement about successful learning through scaffolding, there are some similarities to T1’s explanation about the RL. T1 states that the students can control their learning through the use of the RL which leads to stronger feeling of
safety among the students. Even though, Gibbons (2009) does not use the word safe, she argues that the students can feel comfortable. Gibbons (2009) states that the students end up in the comfortable zone when they get high support, but a low level of challenge. However, T1 gave examples of students who dared to challenge themselves when they felt safe. This means that the students both feel safe by using the rubric, and that they are challenged through the tasks. According to Gibbons (2009) the high challenge and high support means that the students are in the zone of learning and engagement, in other words, the zone of ZPD.

How is the rubric for speaking skills used in the English classroom?

Firstly, this part of the text will describe how the RL was introduced in the classroom in order for the reader to get an understanding of how the teachers supported and scaffolded the students. Secondly, it will determine what strategies the teachers had to add in order for the students to use the RL. Moreover, it will compare the result to previous literature and discuss the findings.

How was the rubric for speaking skills introduced?
Both the teachers explained that the students did not understand the rubric from the very beginning. In order for the students to understand the RL, the teachers had to go through the rubric and explain it. T1 clarified how they introduced the RL for the students. Firstly, T1 had an instruction session with the students where they discussed what the different kinds of words in the rubric meant, in order for them to understand the content in the RL and to be able to use it during the lesson. Secondly, T1 asked the students to come up with ideas of what strategies are and what strategies they can use. In the interview, T1 said that the students could have other ideas and examples then herself. Thirdly, T1 added specific words and sentences as a support for the students speaking task. For example, sentences like “I see…” or “In my spare time…”, the teacher calls it “starting words” during the interview. T2’s support was similar to the support T1 explains. T2 describes that it was impossible for the students to understand the RL on their own. Though the introduction, T2 showed the RL on the smartboard and allowed the students to use it as a support during the exercise. The students were able to walk up to the smartboard in order to figure out how the RL should be used. This
resulted in discussions among the students, and they could help each other figure out the meaning of the RL’s concept and structure. Moreover, T1 stated that it is important to include the students in the education and make them feel that they are a part of the learning. T1 continues to argue why the rubric is useless in the very beginning: “[…] without the starting phrases or words, it is useless, so I think in the beginning the starting phrases are more important. […]”

Gibbons (2009) compare the teachers support to a scaffolding around a building. The teachers have to support the students with material and methods in order for the students to manage a task. By the teachers’ explanations, we can see that they had to add an instructions, strategies, and supporting sentences and words. According to T1, the RL was useless without these factors. T2 gives an example of an introduction in line with the social cultural perspective, where the students are able to help each other in order to solve the problem (Lundgren, Säljö & Liberg, 2014; Gibbons 2009). According to Alm (2015), the rubric is written toward the students, in order for them to use it for their own learning. However, by comparing Alm’s (2015) words towards the information from the teachers’ perspectives, the two perspectives differ. In other words, the RL is not suitable for the students in practice without the teacher support. In order to apply the RL to the English classroom, there is need of additional support by the teachers.

What strategies were used?
The next section of the text will determine what strategies were used together with the RL. Moreover, these strategies will be analysed in relation to previous research about different types of strategies.

Both the teachers added strategies to the rubrics in order to support the students’ spoken language learning by making the rubric clearer. Firstly, T1 argued about the rubric’s positive effect on the students spoken language learning, which was supported by T2 as well. The teachers described some positive outcomes of implementing the RL. One advantageous of the RL was that it made the students feel safe when they faced a problem, because of its clarification of what the different steps the students needed to do in order to solve the problem. T1 stated; “I think that the rubric helps them to feel safe even though when it is a kind of wobbly situation, even though they feel insecure […].” T2 brought up an example of
how the students solved problems in a social context through the RL’s visualisation what earlier had been invisible;

“It helps them… all of them, to see what they have to do, where they are, and together they help each other to develop. Because they see what they did not see more than the task. They see what they have to do to learn.”

However, that opinion changed through the interview, and T1 became more critical of the rubric. T1 explained that the RL was lacking because of its limited description of strategies. T1 stated:

“I think the rubric is not a good one because if you just read it to the students or if they just read it for themselves and they don’t know what a strategy is in terms of speaking in English, if they don’t know a strategy or, then it’s not good.”

According to T1, it was rather the strategies which the teachers themselves added to the RL that was beneficial for the students’ spoken language learning than the rubric itself. T2 stated that the RL was lacking because it did not include example of strategies for the students to use. T2 clarified that the students had to be given examples of strategies to be able to use RL. Moreover, T2 stated that an instruction including discussion about the strategies was needed in order to clarify what a strategy is and what strategies to use. The strategies mentioned by the teachers are listed in the table underneath.

Strategies used by the teachers;

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<th>Strategies used by the teachers;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The requirements of the RL requested that strategies should be used to keep a dialog going, but not what kinds of strategies. No examples of strategies are mentioned in the RL. The strategies mentioned in the table above are all designed by the teachers in order for the students to use for communication. Börjesson (2012) brings up three examples of strategies, and the third one matches the strategies used by the teachers. According to Börjesson (2012), the metacognitive strategies refer to planning, doing and evaluating a work. However, the metacognitive strategies were not mentioned as strategies by the teachers, at least not as strategies. Neither were the cognitive strategies. The third type of strategies are the socio-affective strategies, which refers to the strategies used in actual interaction in social contexts (Börjesson, 2012), in fact, methods to use in actual interaction for communication in spoken language. Börjesson’s (2012) explanation about the socio-affective strategies are consistent with the strategies used by the teachers.

How does the rubric for speaking skills outline knowledge requirements for the speaking skill in order for the students to understand?

This section will firstly investigate how the RL outlines the learning objectives by comparing RL to the syllabus’s (2011) knowledge requirements for English, with the focus on the speaking skill. In the table down below, the knowledge requirements from the syllabus (Skolverket, 2011) for grade 6 are set together with the learning requirements from the RL, with a focus on the speaking skills. I have translated the RL from Swedish into English in the table. Secondly, I compare and analyse the two rubrics. Thirdly, this section will declare the teachers’ opinions about how the rubric outlines the knowledge requirements for the students. Finally, I discuss the results in relation to previous research.

Skolverket’s (2011), and Alm’s (2015) knowledge requirements;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The knowledge requirements from the syllabus</th>
<th>The requirements from the rubric for the English-speaking skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade E</strong></td>
<td>The first column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In oral and written production, pupils can express</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


themselves simply and understandably in phrases and sentences.

To clarify and vary their communication, pupils can work on and make some simple improvements to their communications.

In oral and written interaction, pupils can express themselves simply and understandably in words, phrases and sentences.

In addition, pupils can choose and use a strategy that solves problems and improves their interaction.

Grade C

In oral and written production, pupils can express themselves simply, relatively clearly and to some extent coherently.

To clarify and vary their communication, pupils can work on and make simple improvements to their communications.

In oral and written interaction, pupils can express themselves simply and relatively clearly in words, phrases and sentences.

In addition, pupils can choose and apply some different strategies to solve problems and improve their interaction.

Grade A

In oral and written production, pupils can express themselves simply, relatively clearly and relatively coherently,

I can speak about simple things so that other people understand me.

I use one strategy in order to keep up a dialog.

The Second column

I can speak so that other people understand me.

I use some strategies in order to keep up a dialog.

The third column

I can speak on the basis of the purpose, recipient, and situation.
To clarify and vary their communication, pupils can work on and make simple improvements to their communications.

In oral and written interaction, pupils can express themselves simply and clearly in words, phrases and sentences, which to some extent are adapted to purpose, recipient and situation.

In addition, pupils can choose and apply several different strategies to solve problems and improve their interaction.

I use many different strategies to keep up the dialog.

The RL includes strategies, and it is written in similar way to the syllabus’s rubric. The three middle horizontal columns in RL have similar structure as the columns for grade E, C and A in the rubric as in the syllabus. In other words, the criteria represented in the different levels represented in RL, are similar to the different grades. The first level can be compared to grade E, the second level to grade C, and the third and last level is comparable to grade A. The amount of strategies to use in order to reach a grade or a level in RL are the same. To reach grade E, or level one in the RL, the students are required to use one strategy. In order to get to the next level of the RL, or reach the grade C, they must be able to use some strategies. Finally, to reach grade A they should manage to use several strategies, and to reach the last level of the RL the students have to use many different strategies. In addition, there are similarities between the last columns of both the rubric for the knowledge requirements in English from the syllabus for and the RL. In the last column of both the rubrics, it is implied that the students have to adapt their spoken language in order to suit the purpose, recipient and situation. However, the RL’s criterion is more advanced than the syllabus’s criterion for the level A. To reach the last level of the RL it is required to “speak on the basis of purpose, recipient and situation”. However, the knowledge requirements ask the students to express themselves simply in oral interaction but just to some extent adapted to purpose, recipient, and situation. In fact, the rubric of the syllabus requires that the students can choose and use strategies for the grade E, where the RL only requires that they have to use strategies to reach the first level. Moreover, to receive the grade C, it is required to choose and apply different strategies to improve an interaction, whether it is required to use, but not to choose or apply
some different strategies to get to the second level of the RL. This means that the RL requires more effort than it requires to reach the highest grade according to Skolverket (2011).

T1 stated that the RL helped the students to see their learning process because it visualised the students learning. In fact, it visualised what knowledge requirements that were included in a certain skill. In addition, the knowledge requirements in the RL were organised into different levels. Moreover, T1 argued about the importance of visualising the learning for the students and stated that the rubric is a great example of that. Furthermore, T1 compares her own time in school and says that her teacher never explained exactly what the learning goal was; her teacher instead gave his students a certain amount of page numbers to read. T1 argues that she does not want to do the same as her teacher did because the goal is for the students to learn for life and not for only one test.

“[…] We are not going to hide what they are going to learn, because what is the goal of that? We want them to learn for life, we want them to understand why they need a specific skill. We don’t want them to learn just for a test. […]”

Furthermore, T1 argued about the importance of having a clear rubric which the students understood and could get help from. However, T1 stated the rubric that they used was not a clear one. The rubric was still in the beginning of a process, and the goal was to develop it. When I asked what T1 meant with a clear rubric, she gave the explanation that a clear rubric shows the students example of strategies and includes words which the students can understand. Moreover, T1 explained that the rubrics visualised what the students had to do and that they could follow their own learning process through the visualisation of the knowledge requirements organised in different levels. T1 describes as follows;

“[…] …they understand it, like I said before, they can like check themselves. And then okay I’m here, if I just do a little bit more, maybe use another strategy I can come up to the next level. […]”

Wiliam (2013) declares formative assessment as a process, as well as all tools that are included to lead the learning forward. Alm (2015) states that the main aim for the RL is to be used for the learning process, in other words, in order to achieve formative assessment. In addition, Alm (2015) argues that the RL is a good tool for summative assessment when it is time for grading, but he is opposed to use it for grading single assignments. In fact, Alm
(2015) states that it is negative to grade any single assignment. Contrastingly, the teachers determined that RL should not be used as a summative rubric. T1 argued that the goal of the commitment plan is to use the RL as a formative assessment tool. Moreover, it should not be used for summative assessment, such as grading. In addition, T2 mentioned that the RL has a formative aim and should not be mixed up with a summative rubric. Similar to the syllabus’s (Skolverket, 2011) rubric for grading, the RL concretises the learning requirements written in difficulty levels. However, the teachers stated that the differences are that the RL’s levels are not connected to any grades. The RL should be used during lessons for the learning process instead. In other words, the teachers stated that rubric is a tool for formative assessment rather than for summative assessment. However, by listing the learning objective in Alm’s (2015) rubric and comparing it to the rubric for knowledge requirements in the syllabus, the results show many similarities between the summative grading rubric from the Syllabus focusing on the speaking skills for grade 6 (Skolverket, 2011).

With this in mind, I disagree with the teachers who stated that the RL is not connected to the grading. It is possible to use the RL as a summative tool when it comes to grading, because of the similarities between the knowledge requirements in the syllabus (Skolverket, 2011) and the RL’s requirements. However, RL should not be used for grading independently of the grading scale, because of the differences between the rubrics. Alm (2015) agrees that the RL can be used as a summative tool for grading, even though it is mainly used as a formative tool for the spoken language process.

Alm (2015) argues that the rubrics are well created to suit the students, rather than the teachers. Furthermore, Alm (2015) compares the structure and language in the RL to the rubric for grading in the syllabus (Skolverket, 2011), and draws the conclusion that the rubric for grading is written towards the teachers, while the RL is directed towards the students. Contrastingly, both the teachers agreed that the language used in the RL is complicated and that the concepts are difficult for the students to understand. T1 states, “if they just read it for themselves and they don’t know what a strategy is in terms of speaking in English, [...] then it’s not good”. T2 agrees with T1 and states that the students don’t understand the words used in the rubric. The concepts purpose, recipient and situation, which all included in the rubric, where discussed by both the teachers. T2 declared that neither of the concepts was understandable for the students. However, T1 stated that the students were familiar with the concepts since they have seen them in contexts of other subjects, though T1 argued that the concepts are too hard for the students to understand. Moreover, T1 affirmed that the concepts
“enkelt”, “tydligt” and “sammanhängande”, which mean simple, clearly and coherent are more understandable than purpose, recipient and situation, though, Alm (2015) stated that the RL is organised in order for the students to understand the RL and to use it. The teachers’ experiences contradict Alm’s (2015) statement that the rubrics are written in order for the students to understand.

How does the rubric for speaking skills affect the students’ spoken English language learning and development?

The following will describe how the RL affected the students’ language learning and compares the findings to previous literature. In addition, it will bring up an example of how the rubric affected a student negatively, and it discusses the findings to research about the affective filter and emotional factors.

Both the teachers agreed that for most of the students it was a positive outcome that the rubric gave an awareness of what language level they students were at. The awareness gave them an understanding of where they were in their learning process and that information would help them to develop. According to T1, the majority of the students have developed their self-confidence and feel safer though the help of the RL. Furthermore, T1 described that the classroom is much louder now and more students speak in class. All of the students are using their spoken language; and according to T1, this is a big change. However, this does not include all of them, because of their different levels in the spoken language development. T1 gave an example of a boy who is too far from even reaching the first column of the rubric which made him give up. The rubric supports and scaffolds the students who are in the area for which the rubric is created for. In other words, those students who reach any of RL’s levels. T1 argued that all students did not reach the levels in the RL. Those students who do not have sufficient knowledge will not be able to use the rubric. T1 said:

“Yes. I think that for a student who is quite far from even level one, or the first column in the rubric. That person gets aware of that and some students feel if they are too far that they will not reach that. So, their awareness is most of the time good because they know where they are, they can get and use the information to develop but some students if they feel that they are too far from even reaching the first level
they just feel that, why should I even care? Because they fell like, I will not even reach level one.”

T1 argues about the importance to adapt the lesson’s level in order to suit all students. In particular, T1 supported the students mentioned above, by starting the lesson on their level instead of following the rubric. The students were allowed to speak in Swedish if their English language was too limited. T1 gave an example of a task where the aim was to keep a conversation going; the student did not do exactly what was expected within of the rubric, but he reached the first step.

“So, he didn’t say the whole sentence in English but he used the specific word we were looking for. So, that is the first step. Even though, we are far, far from the level one, but he felt that he, on his terms own it.”

However, when I asked if it would be beneficial to expand the rubric and create more columns with knowledge requirements on a lower level, T1 answered:

“[…] Yeah of course, but then it’s like when would it stop? How many levels should we have? […] of course, that would be a solution […] but then we’re like up to ten levels and then like yeah.”

T1 brought up an example of a student who did not like the English subject and especially not to speak English in front of others. Anyway, this student had an unmotivated approach towards the English subject in general. T1 explained that RL was too limited for this specific student, as there was a lack of knowledge requirements suited for this student’s knowledge level. When I asked if T1 could give an example of an effect when students did not reach the first level of RL, T1 answered:

“They feel hopeless. I have especially one kid he hates, I know we should not use that word but he says that he hates English because it is so far […] he got frustrated because he could not master the language because of that he is like far behind. And then he says, I give up it is not a chance. “
I will compare the Four Zones of Teaching and Learning (figure 1), which Gibbons (2009) uses, as mentioned in the Theory to the student who T1 brought up as an example. According to Gibbons, learning is dependent on a balance between both challenge and support. Both the challenge of the task and the scaffolding created by the teachers must be high, in order for the students to reach what Vygotsky called the zone of proximal development (ZPD). But if the students do not reach the first level of the RL, they will not reach the ZPD. By drawing parallels between Gibbons’ (2009) research and T1’s explanation, the most students felt safe by using the RL and are challenged by the tasks, which means that they are in the ZPD with the use of RL. However, this was not the case for all the students. By listening to T1’s description of the student who felt hopeless and wanted to give up, it seems like the students are in the frustration and anxiety zone. T1 had to simplify the lowest level of the RL in order to adapt the requirements for the student. According to Krashen (2009), emotional factors such as self-consciousness and anxiety have a big impact on the students’ learning. The fear of making mistakes and not succeeding influences the learning in a negative direction. Krashen’s (2009) research can be an explanation of the student’s behaviour towards the English subject. By analysing the student’s behaviour to Krashen’s (2009) research, the conclusion can be drawn that the student’s self-confidence is adversely affected by the realisation of not reaching even the lowest knowledge level. Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that anxiety is unattached to anyone’s personality. Instead, they argue that the anxiety is related to the context. In this case, the student’s anxiety is affected by the knowledge of failing. However, when I asked if it could be a possible for the teachers to expand the RL and create more columns with adapted requirements, it seemed like T1 did not agreed with my opinion. T1 responded with;

“[…] How many levels should we have? […] of course, that would be a solution […] but then we’re like up to ten levels and then like, yeah.”

It is a major problem that the RL does not reach all students. Wiliam (2013) states that all students are different and need different goals. He compares the goal as a horizontal line and argues against that the goal is not equal for everyone. In fact, there are many different goals, and the students can choose different directions (Wiliam, 2013).
How does the teachers perceive that the rubric work to facilitate the learners’ self-awareness of their spoken English language development?

This section will describe the teachers’ view of how the rubric facilitates the students’ self-awareness of their spoken English language through the use of RL. In addition, this will be analysed in relation to previous research.

Both the teachers agreed that the RL’s visualising of the knowledge requirements supported the students’ motivation toward learning the spoken English language. T2 argued that the students saw more clearly what they needed to focus on, which lead to development. When they saw the learning, divided into different levels, they got motivated to continue climbing higher and followed the arrows in order to get better. T1 stated, “[…] if it’s clear what they need to learn or what to do it will motivate them to do it and then reach for a new level and the other level.”

According to Hattie (2009), one of the most important factors for successful learning development is for the students to see their own learning process in order to be able to understand and affect it. William (2013) argues that many students have difficulties to understand what is important to focus on and when they learn a subject. In addition, many students lack knowledge of how they can affect their own results. Alm (2015) argues that rubrics help the students to get an understanding of what to focus on and how they can affect their own results. This was supported by T1, who stated that the target rubric for speaking skills visualised the learning for the students and made it possible for them to understand what they had to do to reach the next level. On the other hand, T1 explained that the students were still in the process of understanding the rubric, and no one managed to use the rubric on their own. However, T1 argued that the students were able to use the rubric if she started every lesson with instructions about the rubric, to remind them about how the rubric is used. Both the teachers agreed that the words and concepts used in the rubric were difficult for the students to understand. This could be one reason why the students could not use the rubric by themselves. However, the teachers argued that the rubric helped the students as long as they included it the social context and let the students work together with their peers. The teachers statement about the students’ motivation that appeared through the RL’s visualising is
supported by Wiliam (2013), who argues that an effect of engaging the students in their own learning process are that they become motivated towards learning the subject. In addition, students become more the willing to develop.

Even though the teachers disagreed about the students’ difficulties to understanding the rubric, they summarised that the rubric had worked as a positive learning tool. The effects of the RL were that the students spoke more in class and felt more motivated to develop their spoken language. Hattie (2009) and Wiliam (2013) agree that it is advantageous for the students to get tools to see their language development and to be able to affect it. Hattie (2009), supports the teachers’ opinion that the students’ willingness to develop their own language has a positive contribution on their language learning. Hattie (2009), states that one of the most important factors for language learning is that the students are willing to take part in the responsibility for their own learning process. Moreover, Wiliam (2013), states that the students have to own their own learning and take the responsibility to self-assess themselves, in order to develop their knowledge or ability in the particular subject. Most students got help to develop by the RL, but it was through discussions, tasks and help from each other rather than through the rubric itself. Moreover, they needed to have repeated instructions and discussions about the rubric with the whole class in order to use it effectively.

Conclusion

This part will summarise the most relevant information of the result and discussion in order to answer the research questions. The research questions are as follows: What kind of rubric for speaking skills is used in the English classroom? Why is the rubric for speaking skills used? How is the rubric for speaking skills used in the classroom? How does the rubric for speaking skills outline the knowledge requirements for the speaking skills in order for the students to understand? and How does the rubric for speaking skills affect the students’ spoken English language learning and development? Furthermore, this part will present the limitations of the study, as well as, possible further research.

According to the teachers, the RL is used as a method with a formative approach to help the students to reach a passing grade. It is possibly to find similarities between the teachers’
statements to Krashen’s (2009) description of learning. The RL is used as an explicit tool for language development. This means that the students are aware of their language development, and according to Krashen (2009), this means that the students are learning the language rather than acquiring it. Moreover, the RL is used for the students to feel safe. When parallels were drawn between the teachers’ explanations and Gibbon’s (2009) research, it materialized that the majority of the students felt safer by using the RL. In fact, by comparing T1’s explanations and Gibbons (2009) statements of high support and high challenge, I can conclude that the majority of the students reach the ZPD by the use of RL. This will be discussed further down in the last paragraph.

Gibbons (2009) does not use the word safe, she argues that the students can feel comfortable. Gibbons (2009) states that the students end up in the comfortable zone when they get high support, but low challenge. However, T1 gave examples of students who dared to challenge themselves when they felt safe. This means that the students both feel safe by using the rubric, and get challenges through the tasks. According to Gibbons (2009) the high challenge and high support means that the students are in the zone of; learning and engagement, in other words, the zone of ZPD.

By drawing parallels between Brookhart’s (2013) and CARLA’s (2018) descriptions about rubrics and the teachers’ answers from the interview, the conclusion can be drawn that the RL is both analytic and general. Moreover, by analysing the teachers’ answers and comparing their analyses to Brookhart’s (2013) and CARLA’s (2018) research, I realised that the teachers strived to develop a clearer general rubric that is easier for the students to understand. The teachers argue that the RL should not be connected to a rubric for summative assessment. Through the responses in the interviews and comparison to the literature, it is found that the RL is beneficial to use as a formative tool.

The RL is used in line with the social cultural perspective. This was found by comparing the result to Gibbons (2009) research and Vygotsky’s theory about the social cultural classroom (Lundgren, Säljö & Liberg, 2014). The RL was introduced to the students, together with added scaffolding methods created by the teachers. Additionally, the teachers had to develop different assessment methods where the students could help each other in order to understand the RL. The strategies used by the teachers are socio-affective strategies. This conclusion can
be drawn by the comparison between the teachers’ explanations of the used strategies to Börjesson’s (2012) research about strategies.

The rubric was not sufficient on its own because the students did not understand the outlined knowledge requirements in the RL, and they could not use the RL without the support from the teachers. The language in the RL is not easy for the students to understand. Therefore, the teachers need to develop it in order for the students to use it on their own. As mentioned before, even though the teachers stated that the RL was a formative tool and that it should not be used as a summative tool for grading, there are still many similarities between a summative rubric and the RL. I can conclude that it is possible to use the RL for summative assessment as well as for formative assessment because of the similarities between the RL and the grading rubric in the syllabus. However, the RL has sometimes higher requirements than the rubric for grading: because the last level of the RL states that the students should be able to speak on the basis of purpose, recipient and situation, while Skolverket’s (2011) requirement to reach an A is to some extend to be able to adapt the language to purpose, recipient and situation. However, the syllabus’s rubric is more specified and includes different abilities then Alm’s (2015) rubric.

By analysing the teachers answers and comparing them to previous research, the conclusion can be drawn that most of the students do develop their spoken language learning through the use of RL. According to T1, it is beneficial for the majority of the students who meet the knowledge requirements stated in the rubric’s different levels. Comparing the results to Gibbons’ (2009) research about the table of Four Zones of Teaching and Learning (figure 1), it is shown that the RL is advantageous for students who meet high challenge from the task, together with high support from the RL, as well as from the teachers’ added support to the RL. On the other hand, the RL is not beneficial for all the students. If the students do not have the knowledge required by the RL’s levels, the RL will instead hinder their development and have a negative effect on their language learning. These cases can be compared to the zone of anxiety and frustration, which is not sufficient but rather negative for the students (Gibbons, 2009). As a conclusion, I state that the RL is beneficial for the students who meet the knowledge requirements, but it has negative effects on students who are at a lower level and do not reach the level of the RL. In addition, if the rubric does not help the students who needs it the most, in order to reach the passing grade, it means that the aim of the RL is failing to a certain degree.
Limitations of the study

The study has been influenced by the limited number of participants, since the number of participants affect the reliability of a study. It is impossible to determine if the findings of this study can be generalized to more schools in Sweden. In order to create a result representative for whole Sweden it would be necessary to increase the number of participating teachers. Another requirement would be to increase the geographical area, since the participants in this study worked in the same school. Moreover, the participating teachers belonged to the same commitment plan and had got the same information about the RL. This may have affected the similarities in many of their answers, whether if the participants received information from different sources independently of each other. The comfort selection of teachers I already knew have possible affected the results.

Further research

An interesting future research would be to study the RL in the same school in the future, when the RL is more established. In order to investigate differences in the teachers’ perceptions of the RL’s effects on the students spoken language learning. In addition, analyse the development of the RL’s structure and outline of the knowledge requirements. Moreover, re-do the study with a larger number of participants to get a more trustful conclusion. In addition, a larger number of participants from different schools among Sweden would generate in a more generalizable result, implementable to more schools. Furthermore, I would like to get the students perspectives and perceptions of the RL.

Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Interview Questions for the first interview

Background

- For how long have you worked as a teacher? For how long have you been teaching at this school?
- Teaching the English classroom questions:
- What grade do you teach English?
- What education do you have?
- What subjects includes in your education?
- What subjects do you teach?
- What grade do you currently teach?
- How many hours a week do you teach English?
- How often can you deal with speaking in the classroom?

Rubrics

- What kind of tasks/activities are you using to the rubrics? (Can you please give me an example)
- Which are the speaking strategies that the students use to keep a dialog going?
- Which are these different strategies?
- The different columns have a concept in the bottom which says Eleven kan uttrycka sig enkelt, tydligt och sammanhängande. What does it mean with enkelt, tydligt och sammanhängande?
- One column says: “Jag kan tala utifrån syfte, mottagare och situation”. What does it mean by the words syfte, mottagare and situation?
- How do you work with rubrics for speaking in the classroom?
- How did you present the rubrics for the students?
- How do you work with the rubrics outside the classroom with your co-workers?
- How do you think that the rubrics scaffold (support) the students spoken language development?
- Why do you use rubrics? (In what way?)
- Why do you use rubrics especially for the students’ speaking skills? (Do you see any advantages or disadvantages?)
- Do you use them in other purposes than in the classroom? (For example, during meetings with parents etc?)
- What do you think about using rubrics in the English classroom? (Why?)
- What do you think about using rubrics with focus on speaking? (Do you prefer it or not? Why?)
- According to Alm (2015) the structure of the rubric is created so that the students easily will understand it, what do you think about that? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
The teachers understanding of the students’ perspectives

- How do you think the students understand rubrics for speaking?
  - Do they know what the different concepts mean? (Visible learning; content, layout, language, concepts)
- Do the students understand the concepts; syfte, mottagare, situation?
- Do the students understand the concepts; enkelt, tydligt and sammanhängande?
- How do you think the students develop their speaking skills by the use of rubrics?
  Why/Why not? How do they develop their speaking skills?
- Have you seen any progress in the students’ spoken language by the use of rubrics?
  Why do you think so/in what way/ Please, give me an example
- Have you seen any differences between the students’ progress with the use of rubrics comparing to before they used rubrics?
- How do you think that the students like using the rubrics?
- Has it ever appeared any confusion about the rubrics, how did you work with that?
- Do you think it motivates the students to develop their spoken language through the use of rubrics? Why?
- Have the students met any difficulties using rubrics? What difficulties can you see that the students meet using rubrics? How do you work with that? Do you change the rubrics or explain some words or concepts differently?
- Have you seen any other advantages or disadvantages that the students have met with the use of the rubrics?

Appendix 3
Interview Questions for the second interview

**Background** About yourself

- For how long have you worked as a teacher? For how long have you been teaching at this school?
- What grade do you teach in English?
- What education do you have?
- What subjects includes in your education?
- What subjects do you teach?
- What grade do you currently teach?
- How many hours a week do you teach English?
- How often can you deal with speaking in the classroom?

**Rubrics**

**What?**
- What kind of tasks/activities are you using to the rubrics?
- Which are the speaking strategies that the students use to keep a dialog going?

**How?**
- How do you work with rubrics for speaking in the classroom?
- How do you think that the rubrics scaffold (support) the students’ spoken language development?

**Why?**
- Why do you use rubrics? (In what way?)
- Why do you use rubrics especially for the students’ speaking skills? (Do you see any advantages or disadvantages?)

**Your opinion?**
- What do you think about using rubrics in the English classroom? (Why?)
- What do you think about using rubrics with focus on speaking? (Do you prefer it or not? Why?)
- According to Alm (2015) the structure of the rubric is created so that the students easily will understand it, what do you think about that? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

**The teachers understanding of the students’ perspectives**
- How do you think the students understand rubrics for speaking?
- Do you think the students likes the rubrics?
- Do they know what the different concepts mean?
- How do you think the students develop their speaking skills by the use of rubrics?
- Have you seen any progress in the students’ spoken language by the use of rubrics? Please explain.
- Have you seen any differences between the students’ progress with the use of rubrics comparing to before they used rubrics?
- How do you think that the students like using the rubrics?
- Has it ever appeared any confusion about the rubrics, how did you work with that
- Do you think it motivates the students to develop their spoken language through the use of rubrics? Why?
- Have the students met any difficulties using rubrics?
- Have you seen any other advantages or disadvantages that the students have met with the use of the rubrics?