From Grammar to Communication:

An Analysis of Form and Function in Course Plans and Teaching Materials in the Subject of English for Upper Secondary School

Från grammatik till kommunikation:

En analys av form och funktion i kursplaner och läromedel i engelska för gymnasieskolan

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ABSTRACT

This essay deals with the communicative approach towards learning English. The aim is to investigate how and why form and/or function are stressed in course plans in the subject of English intended for the first year of upper secondary school and how the content of these plans are mirrored in teaching materials. This will be done within a small historical frame from the 70’s until today. Based on a background of the school’s development and the research in the field of education and language studies, the investigation is carried out by firstly analyzing the course plans respectively before weighing them against each other, and secondly by examining each teaching material before comparing their content to the relevant course plan as well as to each other. The focus in these analyses is on the language’s function in contrast to form and on how communicating competence is stressed and exercised. The results show that the course plans are vastly different. The older plan emphasises form to a large extent but it does also contain hints of function. The recent plan, on the other hand, is permeated by function and it has communication as the foremost goal. Both teaching materials correspond quite well to the relevant course plan. The older material exercises mainly form and correctness in individual tasks while the newer material promotes group work and features exercises that practically always require interaction and train the pupils’ communicative abilities. The conclusion that is drawn from this investigation is that there is an obvious shift from a prominence of form to a dominion of function in both the course plans and teaching materials studied in this essay.

Key words: communication, course plan, English teaching materials, function, language studies, upper secondary school
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1 INTRODUCTION

There are two things that every teacher – no matter which subject or at what level they teach – will come across: guiding documents, such as curriculums and course plans that guide us in our decisions of what to teach our pupils, and teaching materials that help us convey the subject at hand. I have decided to combine these topics in this essay.

One of the subject matters is a field that I have become very interested in during my time at Malmö Högskola: teaching materials. It is important for teachers really to understand what material they are working with, what possibilities it provides and what kind of knowledge or competence that material generates. It is equally essential to be aware of if the material can be used in order to satisfy the national requirements for each particular course.

Therefore, this essay will not only deal with teaching materials but also with our governing documents, mainly the course plans in the subject of English intended for upper secondary school. I intend, however, to provide a somewhat wider ideological background of the research in the field of education since the more general theories of learning have influenced theories of language studies.

One of the reasons for analysing course plans is that as a teacher, it is crucial to know and understand these documents inside out. Each course plan is a reflection of its time and mirrors current research and attitude towards language studies as well as society’s need for a certain education. When studying and comparing course plans from different periods of times, a better understanding for today’s guiding documents and the teaching methods it calls for will hopefully emerge. An interesting question is what factors influence our governing documents and to what extent? Much must have changed since the first curriculum for the Swedish upper secondary school was introduced in 1970, but which are the major differences?

It would be interesting to investigate if, and in that case how, the position of form and function has been altered. There has been much research about interaction and communicative abilities in the field of language studies. This is very much visible in today’s course plans in modern languages which are permeated by the term “communication”. Has it always been like this? To what degree are form and function represented in the course plans from 1970 and from 2000 as well as in teaching materials from these periods, and why?

I would like to do this investigation of form and function in order to raise the level of awareness of the changeability and irregularities in the guiding documents that guide
a teacher as well as exemplify how teaching materials are influenced by research in the field of education and language studies.

1.1 AIM
My aim is to find out how and why course plans in the subject of English have changed and how they stress form and function. I also want to investigate to what degree these plans from different periods of time are mirrored in teaching materials. I believe that there is a much stronger emphasis on communicative abilities today and I want to find out if this is accurate. If that is the case, I want to examine how teaching materials exercise the pupils’ communication skills. Thus, the following questions will be dealt with in this essay:

1. How or in what direction and why have our course plans intended for English studies in upper secondary school changed from Lgy 70 until today? What attitude towards language studies is expressed and which theories have influenced this view?

2. If there are shifts in the course plans, how are they mirrored in teaching materials? Which formal and/or functional aspects of English are mainly dealt with in texts and exercises and which methods are used? How is a communicative approach towards language studies expressed?

1.2 METHOD

1.2.1 SELECTION
The material that will be used in this essay is firstly course plans, teaching materials and an interviewee, and secondly material dealing with research in the field of education, theories about language studies as well as information about the Swedish school system and the development of our governing documents.

Starting with the teaching materials, I have decided to study a teaching material from the 70’s, which was used at the three and four year programmes. I would have liked to examine perhaps one more material, but I had difficulties finding teaching materials from this period of time that would fit my criteria: a material used at theoretical programmes during the first year of upper secondary school. The selection of materials from the 70’s available today was in general very small and the only truly relevant material was a material called Spin-Off.

I have also aimed to use materials from the same publishing company since I believe that the results from my analysis would be more correct if I did not mix materials
from different companies. Each company might have its own traditions and methods, which could lead to false assumptions. Also, since I wanted the material used after 1994 to correspond as much as possible with the material from the 70’s, I chose to analyze a teaching material used at the more theoretical programmes since the three and four year programmes in the 70’s had a quite theoretical aim. I have therefore used Blueprint A version 2.0 since it does not only fit my criteria, but it is a new and also much discussed teaching material since it deals with highly current topics and features quite modern exercises.

Hence, only two teaching materials will be analysed. This might seem somewhat narrow, but due to the limited size of this essay and my wish to examine the materials quite thoroughly, there will simply not be room for analyses of additional material. This might affect the essay’s scientific weight, but I would like for it to be regarded as a meticulous spot test of teaching materials and the possibilities they provide in order for pupils to develop communicative skills.

When it comes to materials that are used as background material in various chapters, I have tried to combine materials from public authorities, independent authors and researchers as well as other dissertations and essays in order to get a wide range and variety of opinions.

My choice of interviewee was very much random, I contacted editors of teaching materials in the subject of English at quite a few publishing companies, but I only received answer from Liber. I considered interviewing other editors as well but, once again, due to the essay’s limited size and the lack of response from other companies, I settled with the editor I already was in contact with. She was very cooperative and could provide the information that I needed. The interview was carried out via e-mail.

1.2.2 TECHNIQUES FOR DATA ACQUISITION

The main method in this essay will be text analysis, which is complemented by an interview with an editor of teaching materials. The analyses of the course plans and the teaching materials will be both, as Johansson and Svedner call it in Examensarbetet i lärarutbildningen, monographic and developmental (Johansson & Svedner 2001: 35-36).

A monographic study of a guiding document or teaching material focuses on, for example, what is enclosed, what is excluded, what is highlighted and so on. The starting point of the analysis is the text’s content. In other words, what it directly and indirectly says. The content is then illustrated and questioned. A monographic study is actually as sort of a case study since it is a thorough examination of only a few documents. In this essay, the studies of
the course plans and teaching materials are monographic since I have tried to decide what skills these documents and materials propose the pupils should develop - chiefly grammatical or communicative? What should the pupils actually learn, both directly and indirectly? To what extent are the pupils supposed to interact and use the language? How important are the formal aspects of English and how should they be practised? In other words, I have analysed their content in terms of form and function in order to disclose what kind of knowledge of English the plans and the teaching materials generate in reality (ibid, 35-36, 44).

A developmental study is, on the other hand, a study of how something has advanced or changed, and also of why this has happened. For example, how course plans and teaching materials have been developed and altered due to certain factors. These studies are often used when making comparisons between similar texts from different periods of time. Since this investigation also comprises comparisons, developmental studies suit the purposes of this essay quite well (ibid, 35).

The challenge in contrasting different materials to each other does not lie in explaining their contents, but in discovering, defining and illustrating the differences - as well as the similarities - between them. It is a question of what separates the texts, but also of why they are different. One might include something the other one lacks. Context, language, content (the themes, the perspectives featured as well as what is written between the lines) and the connection between the materials are among others brought up as significant areas to include in analyses of this kind. Comparisons can also be used in order to detect one material’s effect on another; perhaps one material is echoed in another? This is exactly the point of contrasting course plan to the relevant teaching material – and of course the older course plan to the new one (ibid, 35-36; Hellspong, 2001: 78-81).

When examining the development of course plans and teaching materials, I have analysed content as well as language and tried to disclose dissimilarities as well as similarities between course plans and between teaching materials. I have focused on how grammatical versus communicative abilities stand against each other in the course plans and if their positions, that is the emphasis on them, have changed and in that case why. Are the development of and the changes in our governing documents mirrored in the teaching materials? Do the exercises train the same skills and stress the same aspects of the language as the guiding documents?

Moreover, it is rewarding to find out during which circumstances the materials that are to be analysed - the course plan and the teaching material - were created. The context, in this case the dominating language theories as well as the societal situation in which the
material was formed, can reveal much about the document’s structure and content. This has been pointed out both by Bell in her *Introduktion till forskningsmetodik* and by Hellspong in *Metoder för brukstextanalys* (Bell 2000: 98-99; Hellspong 2001: 20, 55).

As a complement to the text analysis and in connection with the teaching materials, I have made contact with a well known company that among other things publishes teaching materials, Liber. I have via e-mail conducted an interview with one of their editors of teaching materials intended for studies in the subject of English, Anna Granlund. Granlund may of course be loyal to the company she works for and thus partial, but my main reason for contacting her was to obtain information about the process of creating teaching materials. To carry out an interview via mail is maybe not optimal since the interviewee’s body language and tone of voice cannot be taken into consideration and there is no possibility to ask spontaneous questions. On the other hand, Granlund was given time and space to mull over my questions and could answer at her convenience. Certain questions were quite extensive and probably needed some consideration. Hence, an interview via e-mail might give more profound answers. Granlund was very cooperative and helpful and I therefore do not feel that the results of the interview suffered from the form in which it was carried out.

For the interview, I have used Johansson and Svedner’s advice regarding qualitative interviews. This kind of interview is used in order to understand someone’s values, knowledge of or attitude towards something. The key in a qualitative interview is to ask “open” questions so that the interviewee can give profound and meaningful answers. The topic is set but the questions are not determined on forehand; instead they are formed during the interview and vary depending on the answers the interviewee provides. For research ethic reasons, Granlund has not only been informed about the purposes for which the information she provides will be used, but she has also examined and approved what is written about her and Liber. This is insisted upon by both Johansson and Svedner as well as Vetenskapsrådet (Johansson & Svedner 2001: 23-27; Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning 2002: 7-11).

1.2.3 PROCEDURE

The order in which the above analyses will be carried out is the following: I will start by analyzing and comparing the course plans in the subject of English from Lgy 70 and Lpf 94 (the revised plan from 2000). The next step is a thorough investigation of the teaching materials, *Spin-Off* from 1977 and *Blueprint A version 2.0* from 2007, which will be compared to each other as well as to the relevant course plan in order to see if they measure
up to the plans’ requirements and goals. Since the focus is on the possibilities they provide for learning to communicate in English, mainly the exercises will be analysed. The findings of my investigation will be reflected upon in a concluding discussion.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term “communicative competence” was coined by Dell Hymes. He claimed that “communicative competence” is, together with grammatical competence, that the speaker knows when a sentence is feasible, in which circumstances the uttering is appropriate and if it is a saying that has an accepted usage. (Hymes in Tornberg, 2005: 40; Hymes in Scarcella et al., 1990: xi-xiv). That is, when we do not only understand but can also put into practise how, when and to whom it should be said, we are communicatively competent.

It has been claimed that communicative competence is not something that we can achieve on our own nor is it a personal quality; it is instead “a social production, an interactional achievement”. It has “phonological, lexical, morphological, discoursal and conceptual aspects”, which all interconnect and are displayed at different times, during diverse circumstances and to varying degrees. A “malfunction” in communication can therefore be caused by problems at any of these three points (Meyer, 1990: 209-210).

“Communicative competence” is also a term associated with the work of the European Council, which is an organisation that serves as a platform for discussions in different areas, such as education and culture. They host workshops where teachers of languages, researchers, authors of curriculums and so on discuss language studies. Sweden has taken part in these workshops since the council was founded in 1949 (Andered, 2001: 26).

The council has been a strong promoter of a more communicative aim when learning a second language and has come to dramatically influence the view of language studies. It has had a vast bearing on the Swedish school system since the 70’s. (Tornberg, 2005: 39-41; Tornberg, 2000: 179). For example, language studies in steps is a system that has been reproduced in our course plans from 2000 after the council’s A Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching (CEF) from the early 90’s (Malmberg, 2001: 18-19; Andered, 2001: 26-27, 31).

Jan van Ek was a member of the council who created a course in the subject of English that had communicative competence as its goal. It focused on the functional aspects
of the language rather than the formal ones. He claimed that the objectives of learning, that often is on individual reading and writing, instead should be on communication, especially oral communication, and it should “specify what learners will be able to do after having completed the learning process” (van Ek in Tornberg, 2000: 171-172, van Ek 1985: 3).

The course called *The Threshold Level* was published in 1975. It provided a holistic approach to language studies with the pupil in the centre and it had pragmatic abilities such as communicative skills as its main goal. Van Ek recognized, among others, social, sociocultural and discourse abilities as crucial when developing communicative skills. (Malmberg, 2001: 17-18). The lack of a purely “grammatical” or “formal” competence shows that these aspects of languages have been given a lower priority in comparison with other competences connected to active use of the language.

Van Ek meant that the common aim within language studies in the EU was to in one way or another use the language. *The Threshold Level* therefore attempted to define what learners minimally needed to be able to do in the studied language. From the very first lesson in the foreign language van Ek argued that communication skills must be trained:

> [R]ight from the first lesson, the pupils will acquire the ability to function in the foreign language, to do something practical with it, and the learning-process will have a clearly situational character in the sense that practise will to a large extent take place in simulated real-life situations. (van Ek 1985: 21)

The above quotation argues in favour of an education with communicative goals. Therefore van Ek continues by claiming that the main criterion in the assessment of pupils “will have to be whether communication takes place”. To be understood by others is essential, but it is equally important that the communication has a sufficient degree of efficiency. That is, the speaker must express himself at reasonable speed, with sufficient precision and with reasonable grammatical, lexical and phonetic correctness (ibid, 21, 35).

Another great influence in the field of language studies is Stephen D. Krashen (born in 1941), who was one of the most influential educational researcher in the 80’s. His work has become more controversial in recent years, but he is still a heavy name in the field of language studies. Two of his theories are the “Input Hypothesis” and “the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis”. He exemplifies the “Input Hypothesis” with the formula “I + 1”, which
asserts that we acquire a second language “by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of (acquired) competence” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 32).

Krashen also makes a distinction between learning a language and acquiring one. This is called “the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis” and claims that adults can develop competence in a second language in two ways: either by acquiring it in a “natural” way through real communication, just as children do when “picking up” their first language and simply “feeling” what is feasible and what is not, or by learning it, which is to know and consciously use the grammatical rules. Krashen suggests that learning a language does not improve our communicative abilities; it only gives us formal knowledge of the language. Therefore, acquisition is to prefer. (ibid, 18-21, 26-27).

However, to what degree the pupils acquire the language is related to his or her “socio-affective filter”. If a pupil has a high filter, less input is “allowed in” to what Krashen calls the language-acquisition device. A low affective filter results in more acquisition of the language. Factors that contribute to a low filter are among others motivation and self confidence (Krashen, 1981: 21-24).

In her book Språkdidaktik, Tornberg makes a distinction comparable to Krashen’s “the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis” between what she calls “deklarativ kunskap”, which is knowledge about a language’s rules, and “procedurkunskap”, which is the ability to actually use these rules in communication (Tornberg, 2005:62). It should be noted that this distinction is based on Krashen’s “Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis” and that it belongs to quite recent research. It nonetheless exemplifies the bearing of Krashen’s theory.

2.2 GENERAL BACKGORUND

This chapter serves as a short introduction to a few of the factors - political, ideological and educational - that have been significant in the transformation process of our upper secondary school system over the past decades.

2.2.1 THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The first school commission in 1946 determined that Sweden ought to have a common obligatory school. In the late 60’s, the three forms of upper secondary school, “gymnasiet”, “fackskolan” and “yrkesskolan”, became one joint school. The newly founded school, “gymnasieskolan” received its first curriculum in 1970 (Lgy 70). A few years later the school was investigated and the government decided that the new school system worked rather well and any changes would be made in steps over the coming years. The changes included the
introduction of “programmes” as well as of “kärnämnen” and “karaktärsämnen”. It was also
decided upon that all upper secondary school education should last three years instead of the
various lengths it had consisted of earlier. Before Lpf 94 was presented, other investigations
were launched and the results of these were taken into consideration when forming our latest
curriculum. The existing structure of our upper secondary school (which will transform in the
coming years) was decided upon in the proposition Växa med kunskaper in 1990 (Linde,

2.2.2 RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION
Many other factors than political decisions have formed our upper secondary school. Equally
important are the influences from research in the areas of education and language studies that
have left traces in our guiding documents. A curriculum is always eclectic, meaning that it is
build up from fragments of independent theories and other influences that often do not share a
connection. The final product is a concoction of these fragments (Linde, 2004: 7).

One of the most influential streams in Swedish schools that has had bearing on
the forming of our curriculums is pragmatism. John Dewey is associated with the motto
“learning by doing” and is recognized as the father of pragmatism, which is to believe that
practical experiences (“doing”) are vital in the learning process (Skola för bildning –
betänkande av läroplanskommittén, 1992: 46). Dewey wanted a closer connection between
the school and the rest of society as well as specific goals for the pupils to work towards in
school. This would both motivate and stimulate the pupils. Dewey also argued that the pupil
(the subject) and his or her thoughts, interests and feelings should be the starting point and the
centre in school, not the matter at hand (the object). The pupils should also be given more
freedom and not be held back by rules or limitations (Forssell, 2005: 79-80, 90, 96).

Another prominent thinker of the 20th century was the Russian psychologist Lev
Semënovich Vygotskij (1896-1934), whose influence on our school system has more to do
with the pupil’s learning abilities and how our growth is affected by what we learn (Skola för
bildning – betänkande av läroplanskommittén, 1992: 71). He was interested in
communicating with tools and argued that language is the most powerful tool and the link
between the individual and society since it enables us to create internal dialogues with
ourselves as well as to communicate with others. Vygotskij maintained that we learn by
interacting and communicating with others and he therefore developed a theory called the
“Zone of Proximal Development” (ZoPed) in which he alleged that we learn by “borrowing”
knowledge from others. When we learn, according to Vygotskij, it must have the formula
“what we know + 1”. In other words, something that we can incorporate in what we already know, as well as something brand new (Forssell, 2005: 119-124).

2.2.3 THE CURRICULUMS

Before the 70’s, behaviourism was the leading ideology in schools. The subject was in the centre and pupils learned and were tested on a mass of knowledge divided into segments without context. Teachers were told exactly how and what to teach (Lundgren, 2004: 38).

This segmentation was still visible in Lgy 70 since it stated exactly what was to be exercised in the subject. In other words, what was preformed locally had been decided on a national level to ensure similarity between corresponding courses. The teachers had the possibility to decide the contents of a course to a small extent (Linde, 2004: 59; Skola för framtiden – tankar bakom gymnasiereformen, 1996: 8).

By the 90’s, our society had reached a whole new level of complexity that made it impossible to maintain the same kind of strict control over the schools as in the past (Skola för framtiden – tankar bakom gymnasiereformen, 1996: 8). Also, international trade thrived and business- and pleasure travels became more common which led to a want and need for communication abilities in foreign languages. This global factor has had a bearing on the new guiding documents, which were presented in 1994 (Skola för bildning – betänkande av läroplanskommittén, 1992: 90).

There are three major differences between Lgy 70 and Lpf 94. Firstly, the government’s control over schools has been removed. This was a result of the decentralisation, which shifted the power over schools from a national to a local level. The strong methodical suggestions are therefore also gone and the teachers and pupils have been given much more independence (Lundahl, 2004: 47, 57; Román, 2004: 73).

Secondly, Lpf 94 has a more pragmatic perception of how we learn things, which probably is influenced by Dewey, and it features a redefined meaning of “knowledge” and “learning”. The new curriculum has the learner in the centre and turns directly to the pupils and their abilities instead of addressing only the professionals (Román, 2004: 68, 83, 85). It asserts that the school must “take as the starting point each individual pupil’s needs, preconditions, experience and thinking” (Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system Lpf 94, 1994: 13; Lundahl, 2004: 62). This forced teachers to completely rethink their methods – without any given guidelines.

Thirdly, the ambition in the new course plans is for the pupils to become aware of their learning process and to involve them in their own education (Andered, 2001: 28).
They are not viewed simply as receivers of knowledge as in Lgy 70, instead they should ”experience” “examine” and “reflect”. These are phrases that once again make Dewey’s influence visible. The teacher’s role has changed from a source of facts to a mentor that provides opportunities (Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system Lpf 94; Skola för bildning – betänkande av läroplanskommittén, 1992: 143, 163).

3 ANALYSES OF THE COURSE PLANS

In this chapter, the course plans from 1970 and 2000 will be reviewed and discussed separately before they will be compared. It should be noted that the plan form the 70’s only was intended for pupils at the more theoretical programmes, while the recent plan for English level A addresses every single pupil in our upper secondary school since this course is obligatory at all programmes.

3.1 LGY 70’S COURSE PLAN IN ENGLISH

3.1.1 THE COURSE PLAN

The course plan in English from 1970 is divided into two parts with the following headings: “goals” (main and for each level) and “comments and directions”. In the goal section it can be read that studies of English have three main goals: the pupil should develop his or her ability to understand spoken and written English, get better at speaking, reading and writing English as well as learn about English culture (Lgy 70 II: Supplement, 1970: 264-265, 273).

During the first year of upper secondary school, the focus should be on pronunciation, listening comprehension and oral exercises (such as short presentations and conversation), reading modern literature that feature idiomatic expressions and clearly depicted settings, reading easily accessible poems, vocabulary and word formation, practice exercises in writing, grammatical patterns connected to a text and, finally, cultural information connected to a text. Also, the pupils should encounter General American (GA) and be given an introduction to stylistics (ibid, 273).

Among the comments and directions, it is expressed that studies of English should increase the pupils’ proficiency of English just as much as it should provide an orientation in English culture. Furthermore, only Received Pronunciation (RP) should be taught, but pupils that spoke GA or had an Australian accent should not be forced to switch to
RP. Examples of how to connect English to other subjects are also given in this part of the plan (ibid, 273-274).

What follow next in the comments and directions section are outlines and methods for how a teacher should teach English. It is stated that the different parts of English should form a whole and that it ought to be spoken by the teacher in order to encourage the pupils to speak it as well. Their oral activity should be stimulated. In addition to this, there are extended directions for how the teacher should divide the time at hand between different assignments and methods, how homework ought to be alternated and tested, how the pupils should be taught to take notes and how grammar should be dealt with. In grammar, for example, it is recommended that the teacher introduces a grammatical rule and then gives practice sentences as homework (ibid, 269-270, 274). Most of the directions are connected to dealings with texts and different kinds of individual reading.

3.1.2 DISCUSSION OF THE COURSE PLAN
In the plan from the 70’s, the formal aspects of English are accentuated. The importance of reading texts and being familiar with grammatical structures are stressed and outweigh the language’s functional aspects. I agree with Sundell’s observation that more time might have been spent talking about the language than actually speaking it! (Sundell, 2001: 43). It has been argued that a strong emphasis on grammar would eliminate mistakes when reproducing the language as well as it was “easier” and “safer” for the teacher to assess grammatical tests and translations than freer exercises such as talking exercises.

However, the first sign of a changing attitude towards form can be found in Lgy 70 when the role of grammar is described as functional and should only contribute to the pupil’s ability to use the language (Malmberg, 2001: 16-17; Lgy 70 II: Supplement, 1970: 267). This almost means that form has lost some of its value and has been reduced to a tool used for other purposes than only linguistic; it should facilitate communication.

Nevertheless, to learn about grammatical patterns and word formation are two elements that were to be included in the first year of English at upper secondary school. This stands in contrast with the claim that pupils should be encouraged to use their English, which is a highly practical aim. It seems as if this course plan is a meeting place for more traditional approaches to language studies with a focus on form and more modern thinking, which is expressed by stressing function and seeing English as a whole. Yet, with Krashens terminology, learning, not acquisition, permeates this course plan since the pupils are made
aware of the language’s rules. It also takes it starting point in the matter at hand, not in the pupil as Dewey wished.

3.2 LPF 94’S COURSE PLAN IN ENGLISH (REVISED IN 2000)

3.2.1 THE COURSE PLAN

The course plan for English level A consists of a section called “goals that pupils should have attained on completion of the course” and three levels of grading criteria. Among the goals it is specified that the pupils should “understand clearly enunciated speech from different regions, on subjects which are not entirely unfamiliar”, “be able with preparation to verbally provide information about or describe a subject or area of interest, and show evidence of adapting their language to the requirements of the situation” as well as “desire, have the confidence and be able without preparation to take part in discussions on familiar subjects and exchange information, personal views and experiences”. The pupils should also “have a knowledge of social conditions, cultural traditions and ways of living in English-speaking areas, and be able to use this knowledge to compare cultures”.

When it comes to reading and writing, they should “be able to read and understand texts with varying factual contents, especially texts linked to their study orientation or their own areas of interest”, “be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries” and “be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production”.

Furthermore, they are to “be able to consciously use and evaluate different approaches to learning in order to promote learning” and “be able to independently retrieve information from different sources, as well as process and structure the information obtained” (*Course plan for English A, 2000*).

3.2.2 DISCUSSION OF THE COURSE PLAN

Practically all authors of the secondary literature used in this essay agree upon one important fact in the study of English today: communication is the ultimate goal. Even the committee behind Lpf 94 declared that the pupils should be able to *communicate* in at least two foreign languages. The choice of the word “communicate” is interesting since it suggests that the

Most of the goals stated in this course plan are in one way or the other linked to the pupil’s own interests and experiences. These thoughts, both concerning goals and the pupils’ interests, can be traced directly to Dewey. The plan gives the teacher and pupils much freedom, which is of course an effect of the decentralisation - but also one of Dewey’s wishes. The pupil is viewed as a producer of the language; he or she should be able to use English in oral and written communication, which also can be seen as quite pragmatic ideas.

This course plan focuses on everyday language and it seems to prepare the pupils to use English for other purposes than merely in school. To develop communicative skills and adjust your language to the social situation it is used in is more important than to be grammatically correct. This suggests that the language should rather be *acquired* than *learnt*, as Krashen recommended. English is seen as one entity that should not be learned piece by piece. Instead, English is a multifaceted subject that must be acquired through a holistic approach order to develop successful communicative skills (Svartvik, 2001: 13; Malmberg, 2001: 21; Sundell, 2001: 39; Gustavsson & Wahlström, 2004: 31-33).

Last but not least, a completely new dimension has been added to this course plan: the pupils should be able to evaluate and reflect upon their own work. This means that the pupil actually has an opportunity to influence his or her education.

### 3.3 A COMPARISON OF THE COURSE PLANS

In the analyses of the course plans, I have concentrated on their differences and examined how the attitude towards language studied is expressed and tried to convey what has influenced this attitude in the recent plan.

This investigation has shown that the course plan from the 70’s is very dissimilar to the one from 2000. The principal shift between Lgy 70 and Lpf 94 is the glide from a focus on form and correctness to a more functional view of English that should make it possible for the pupil to communicate. Form is given a quite strong position in the older plan and English was seen as a set package that the pupils simply were receivers of. However, the prominence of form in this specific plan may have been an attempt to teach these pupils, who attended a theoretical programme, a somewhat more correct and formal English. At any rate, the individual student and his or her progress are invisible; the matter at hand is the focal point and the pupils develop their English simultaneously as one mass. However, there are
signs of the language’s function, but they are few. One example is that the pupils are
couraged to speak English in the classroom.

The course plan from 2000 is vastly different and lack stringent directions and
specific formal goals. Grammatical patterns, linguistics, word formation and so on are not
mentioned at all. Rather, they are purely tools that are needed for more functional purposes,
such as being able to participate in discussions. Function seems to have replaced form since
quite a few goals demand communication and interaction in order for them to be achieved,
which might be an echo of Vygotskij’s ideas about learning through interaction.

In the recent plan, English is regarded as one entity that should, in Krashen’s
terminology, be acquired. It should be used as much as possible in all kinds of interaction.
The plan also turns directly to the pupil and his or her feelings, interests and experiences in
the centre in order to stimulate and generate motivation. These ideas about inspiring the pupil
and having the learner and his or her background as the starting point can be traced directly to
Dewey. Vygotskij’s influence on the course plan might not be as apparent, but he also
promoted interaction and learning from each other.

What remain from the previous plan are the goals concerning English culture
and social conditions as well as an ability to read different types of texts. However, now the
pupils must be able to use what they learn about e.g. English culture by comparing it to other
cultures. The texts should also be linked to their study orientation or their own interests. In
other words, it is no longer sufficient to only read; texts should be carefully chosen and
relevant for the pupil and the reading must have an additional purpose than simply reading.

A few explanations for these changes are the globalisation and today’s complex
society, the decentralization and its effects as well as the immense research in the field of
education and language studies by independent researchers, such as Dewey and Krashen, and
the European Council. The ability to communicate and working towards communicative
competence, as Hymes, Meyer and van Ek all promoted, is the core of language studies today.

4 AN INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING MATERIALS
The following chapter will deal with teaching materials in the subject of English used in the
Swedish upper secondary school. A short background to teaching materials will be followed
by an insight into a publishing company and the process of creating new materials. The
content of chapter 4.2 derives from the interview with Anna Granlund at Liber and features
her answers to the following questions:
- How do you (the publishing company) create new teaching materials?
- Are your recent materials based on older materials? (How?)
- What do you take into account when forming new materials?
- To what extent do you consider our governing documents when creating teaching materials?

4.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRICULUM, COURSE PLAN AND TEACHING MATERIAL

It has been said that earlier, when course plans determined what the pupils should deal with in each course, the teaching materials became a reflection of the course plan it was intended for, or rather, the teaching material was a realization of its course plan. This did in its turn lead to that many authors of curriculum and course plans also became authors of teaching materials. The relationship between course plan and materials began to loosen up in the 70’s, but the content of the curriculum and course plans still indirectly affect the shaping of materials to a certain extent. But then the question becomes: who or what else decides the content in teaching materials today when our course plans are more “open” and do not include specific elements that must be dealt with? (Lundgren, 2004: 10; *Skola för bildning – betänkande av läroplanskommittén*, 1992: 115).

4.2 THE PUBLISHING COMPANY AND TEACHING MATERIALS

Anna Granlund, editor of English teaching materials at the publishing company Liber, has answered this question by describing which factors she and her colleagues take into consideration while working on new materials. Granlund says that the company constantly try to develop their teaching materials, but at the same time they are aware of what kind of themes, texts and assignments that are appreciated, and even expected, by teachers and pupils. For that reason and in order to get new ideas they often use both experienced and inexperienced authors. The authors should preferably have different backgrounds and still make up successful team together. One author should be a native English speaker with good writing abilities; another should have experience of the Swedish school and so on. The team of authors should consist of both men and women in different ages.

The factors that will come to affect the shaping and content of the teaching material – that is what the authors and editors will consider during the creation process – are among others the curriculum and course plans, the changes and trends in society, educational politics and they also visit schools and interview teachers to get their point of view. Granlund
says that keywords for creating teaching materials today are: heterogeneous groups, reflection, evaluation, working independently, different levels that appeal both the slow learners and the pupils that do not need much help. She admits that it is a challenge to incorporate all of these aspects into one coherent package. It is a process that takes 1-2 years to complete.

When the authors finally start to sketch on a new material after all of the preparatory work, the first thing is to create a sort of frame. That is, how the material will be structured, what themes and what kind of texts and assignments they will use. In English teaching materials, Granlund highlights the importance of including authentic texts. Another part in the process is that the layout of the material must be decided upon. A variety of colours, shapes and pictures gives the material character and can even arouse motivation in the pupil. A rich and interesting layout, and the choosing of pictures, are however an expensive – but according to Liber also an important – part in the forming of new teaching materials. That is why they have designers and illustrators to create an appealing layout, depending on the target group.

The team of authors, editors, illustrators and so on makes a first draft of the material, which is sent to schools where it is tested. The drafts will then be sent back with comments from the teachers that have used it. The editorial company has noticed in various market analyses and interviews that many teachers today want grammar to be more visible, accessible and make up a larger part of their teaching than before when there almost seemed to be a desire to “hide” as much grammar as possible.

5 ANALYSES OF TWO TEACHING MATERIALS
The teaching materials that will be analyzed are intended for studies of English at the more theoretical programmes, e.g. the social science programme (“samhällsvetenskapliga programmet), in upper secondary school. The first teaching material, Spin-Off, is from 1977, whereas Blueprint A, Version 2.0., was published in 2007. The focus in these analyses will mainly be on the exercises that the teaching materials provide, but the texts will also be commented on since the exercises often derive from them.

5.1 SPIN-OFF: EXERCISING CORRECTNESS
Spin-Off 1 by John McClintock, Lennart Peterson and Roland Arnell was published in 1977 by Liber. It consists of a textbook, a workbook, a key to the workbook, suggestions for
teachers, material that may be copied and cassettes, where the texts and some listening exercises can be found. The material is quite thin in comparison with today’s materials. The layout is unfortunately somewhat boring since noting is in colour; the few pictures are in black and white.

5.1.1 THE TEXTS
In the foreword of the textbook it is made known that the texts have been chosen after discussions with both teachers and students and that it was important for the writers to produce exciting and interesting texts (McClintock et al., 1977a: 5).

The texts are divided into eight units with four texts belonging to each unit. The units have one theme each, such as manners in England, money, women and crimes. It is very obvious that the texts have been created for teaching purposes; they are alike in style, have similar narrators as well as stereotypical characters and they are all fictional - although different types of texts are featured, such as short stories, journal writing and interviews. The language feels very “artificial” with apparent attempts to exercise for example a certain grammatical pattern. About half of the texts deal with “important” matters, such as relationships to a boyfriend, girlfriend or parent, marriage, pregnancies and so on.

5.1.2 THE EXERCISES
All of the exercises can be found in the workbook, which is divided into eight sections that each is connected a unit in the textbook. The sections share the same structure. It begins with “A: Listening Comprehension”, where the pupils listen to a story and then answer questions by choosing between given alternatives. Only one alternative is correct. The point of the exercise seems to be to check that the pupils have understood the story correctly.

The second section, which is surprisingly similar to section A, is called “B: Understanding”. It consists of questions about what happened in a certain text that is in the textbook. In some units, there are also statements such as “Mr Trevor couldn’t remember the name of a country in Africa” (McClintock et al., 1977b: 9) and the pupils must decide if the statement is accurate or not. Questions like this mainly test one’s memory or it might be a way for the teacher to check if the pupil actually read the text. As far as learning English, it is difficult to see how simple yes or no-questions can be of great help.

The third section, “C: Pronunciation Practice”, moves away from the text. The pupils practice how to stress words, pronounce vowels and decipher phonetic transcription. The words in these exercises are not in a context nor can they be related to the texts.
“D: Language Practice – Talk About It” follows as the fourth section and also enclose oral exercises, but this time they are connected to the texts. The pupils should work individually, in pairs or in groups. The exercises includes statements, such as “I think Mr Strickley is a very nice person” (ibid, 10), that the pupils should agree or disagree with and give reasons for their point of view. This section sometimes contain writing exercises, rewritings of the texts into a scene that is to be enacted and “projects”, such as looking up certain sentence structures in a grammar, reading a book or preparing a presentation. It is however not specified how - or even if - the presentation actually should be given in class.

The last three sections deal with the formal aspects of the English. In “E: Vocabulary and Structures”, the pupils are assigned to for example replace words with given synonyms (“not polite” becomes “rude”) and write a sentence that incorporates a certain structure (“to lean forward”) (ibid, 13). The learners can also deal with dialogue exercises where they practice a certain dialogue until they know it by heart, and then switch roles and practice until they know that part by heart as well. Once again, this is a memory exercise of set sentences. In the next section, “F: Grammar”, the pupils fill in blanks by e.g. flexing verbs and in “G: Translation” they translate a short text into English.

What is striking when going through each exercise in the workbook is that there seems to be a right answer to practically everything and that all of the exercises – with a few exceptions – are connected to and completely depend on the texts in the textbooks. The exercises’ “job” seems to be to check that the pupil has understood (or rather remembers!) the text correctly. The exercises are also very short; they can only take a few minutes each to do.

5.1.3 THE METHOD FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

It must be assumed that through *Spin-Off*, the pupils learn English by reading and understanding texts, repeating set sentences and practising grammar. To actually produce the language on your own is not as important, a fact that stand in contrast to practically all modern research in the area.

*Spin-Off* provides no holistic view of English – even though the curriculum demands it. The A to G division of exercises in the workbook suggests that pronunciation, grammar, translation and so on should be dealt with one at a time. There is a certain system to be followed, and no alternatives to this procedure are given. To learn English thorough exercising isolated abilities or skills, as this material proposes, must in Krashen’s terms be considered as *learning*. The environment in which the language is being dealt with hinders
*acquisition* since the English that is spoken is not only strictly limited by the teaching material, it is also not natural since it serves to practice one skill at a time.

Another consequence of the limited exercises is that the pupils are given very little freedom to be creative. The tasks derive directly from the texts and the pupils are more frequently encouraged to rewrite or translate than to write something on their own. However, the few exercises that actually invite the pupil to think on his or her own can be found in the D-sections and they go beyond the texts in the book. The pupils should for example write about what kind of trip to England one would like to make or read a book (ibid, 12). Perhaps exercises like this are the first steps towards a change in teaching materials? Nonetheless, there is a great lack of these “freer” tasks in the workbook, such as topics for essay writing, discussions and so on. Freer assignments would probably be a step away from *learning* and a step towards *acquisition*.

5.1.4 COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

*Spin-Off* does not offer many exercises that demand communication or interaction. There are a few exceptions in the D-sections, where some tasks actually require cooperation, for example when reading a dialogue. However, these are already finished and very artificial dialogues from the workbook, which means that the communication between pupils is not natural and seldom resembles English “in the real world”. The pupils do not interact on their own terms and cannot influence their learning and interaction. It is decided and limited by the exercise. This leaves a big lack of exercises that require natural interaction.

This teaching material opposes most of the thoughts provided by the prominent thinkers in the field of education: it rarely relates to the pupils’ experiences nor to society as Dewey required, it lacks assignments where the pupils interact and learn from each other as Vygotskij wished for, it mainly does not focus on function as van Ek wanted and it is rather connected to Krashen’s *learning* than *acquisition*. Then again, a glide towards a more functional attitude towards language studies can be spotted in less controlled exercises that allow the pupils to contribute with his or her own thoughts and encourage them to go beyond the book and use their English.

5.1.5 *SPIN-OFF’S AGREEMENT WITH LGY 70’S COURSE PLAN IN ENGLISH*

*Spin-Off* agrees with Lgy 70’s course plan in most cases. The course plan underlines the importance of the pupils’ abilities to *understand* English by *reading* different texts and *Spin-Off’s* textbook presents quite many texts and exercises that check the pupils’ understanding of
it. The course plan does not to any larger degree require that the learners produce English, not through talking nor writing, and this teaching material does not provide many possibilities therefore.

The course plan encourages studies of English culture and a few texts in *Spin-Off’s* textbook deal with this in one way or another. However, the texts offer quite a stereotypical view of England and its inhabitants. The focus is mostly on adult life and there is a lack of texts about the kind of culture or cultural phenomena that teens probably would find appealing, for example music and films. Furthermore, extracts from for instance Shakespeare or other great authors, poets or play writers cannot be found in this material, which is very strange since they ought to be studied when dealing with English culture.

Last but not least, the course plan promotes that the pupils should get a holistic view of English; the language should be seen as one element. In *Spin-Off* one thing is practised at a time in a strict order. Therefore this teaching material does not satisfy this demand.

5.2 **BLUEPRINT A, VERSION 2.0: EXERCISING EVERYDAY ENGLISH**

One of Liber’s most recent teaching materials is *Blueprint A, Version 2.0*, from 2007, which is written by Christer Lundfall, Ralf Nyström and Jeanette Clayton. It is intended for English level A at the upper secondary school’s theoretical programmes. The material consists of the main book, which includes texts and various exercises, a teacher’s guide and a key. The layout of the material is very appealing; it has many pictures (mostly photographs), is rich in colour and is captivatingly asymmetric with texts that must be read from different angles and so on.

5.2.1 **THE TEXTS**

The main book in *Blueprint A* has eight themes, or chapters, and two to four texts belong to each theme. The themes include “Human Rights and Wrongs”, “Virtual Reality For Real” and “All that Glitters...” (about the entertainment industry). The texts deal with different areas within these themes, such as terrorism and child abuse in “Human Rights and Wrongs” and computer games, file sharing and online dating in “Virtual Reality For Real”.

*Blueprint* offers a variety of text types, such as stories, informative texts, lyrics, and even cartoons. They are written in diverse ways from various points of views and have different narrators. This, in combination with their authentic topics, makes the texts seem
genuine. Many of these texts might actually be found in a country where English is the native language.

5.2.2 THE EXERCISES

There are exercises to each text that are divided into the following sections: “Read & React” (or “Listen and React” if the text is supposed to be listened to), Reflect & Share” and sometimes there is a “Word Work”, “Act It Out” (where the pupils are assigned to prepare and perform shorter sketches), or “Further Studies”.

In the “Read & React” section, questions regarding the content of the texts can be found. These are mostly “what”, “how” and “why”-questions, such as “[w]hy can product placement be described as a ‘win-win solution’?” (Lundfall et al., 2007:48). Sometimes the pupils are given alternatives to choose from.

The pupils are supposed to make up their own minds on certain issues and relate the topic to their personal experiences in the “Reflect & Share” section. A few examples of the questions that can be found there are: “[i]n your view, how is the language of men and women/boys and girls different? Give examples from your own experience of from movies and TV shows. (ibid, 132) and “Sophie writes about cultural clashes in her blog. Have you ever experienced any clashes or funny situations when travelling or meeting people from other countries?” (ibid, 23). A few questions demand group discussions: “[w]hat does music add to lyrics? Does it change your experience? Discuss.” (ibid, 27). Other exercises combine individual and group work. The following question should first be prepared individually and then discussed in groups: “[w]hat circumstances could give rise to terrorism and lead to actions like this hijacking a bus full of children?” (ibid, 98).

“Word Work” is the section where the pupils work with words, for example synonyms, word definitions, collocations, phrasal verbs and so on. Only in this section can more formal exercises can be found.

The section “Further Studies” features quite varied tasks: the pupils can be assigned to watch a film and give a presentation about it in class (ibid, 39) or do research as in the following assignments: [w]hat was the real motive behind the horrific attack on the World Trade Center in New York, September 11, 2001? Is there anything that could justify this act? Has anything good come out of it?” (ibid, 98) and “[f]ind out trouble spots around the world where children’s rights are being violated. Where is it? What is happening? How are children’s rights being violated? (ibid, 109).
Blueprint A version 2.0 also contains eight “Writing & Speaking” sections, one to each chapter. These sections have oral exercises such as introducing a classmate to others after having interviewed this classmate (ibid, 28), presenting an article (ibid, 57), giving a short speech (ibid, 83), performing a talk show (ibid, 84) and having a team debate (ibid, 113). The exercises are thus either to be done individually or in groups. The assignments dealing with writing are, on the other hand, individual. These assignments include writing an informal letter (ibid, 30), a summary-response paper (ibid, 84), argumentative essay (ibid, 114) and a film review (ibid, 216). Tips and guidelines to both oral and writing exercises can be found in “Speaker’s Corner” (ibid, 217) and “Writer’s Workshop” (ibid, 238) respectively.

5.2.3 THE METHOD FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

In the foreword of this teaching material, it is stated that English is regarded as a tool and that the method for working resembles the method used in the teaching of Swedish more and more (ibid, 6). This is noticeable in the exercises and assignments that are mainly connected to the usage of English. The pupils are supposed to learn the language by reading texts, then by relating their personal experiences or forming opinions to the matter and finally use the language to express their point of view or to discuss the topic, either orally or in writing. The topic is really only a “tool” that is supposed to spark the pupils’ production of the language. It must hence, just as Dewey suggested, be interesting and appealing in order for the pupils to want to deal with it.

Most of the exercises have no right or wrong answers; they are very free and limitless, as Dewey wished for. They mainly seem to provide questions and dilemmas for the pupils to discuss or argue from their own point of view. However, some of the exercises in the “Read/Listen & React” and “Word Work” sections have correct answers since they are connected to the content of a certain text respective a linguistic phenomenon.

The main goal of the assignments seems to be to produce English, both orally and in writing, and use it in e.g. discussions. These are highly functional goals, just as van Ek suggested in The Threshold Level. Form is still exercised but it is in the shadow of function, or rather, it comes along with more functional assignments. The language is not chopped up into pieces since this would hinder the pupils from receiving a functional notion of English and thereby delay their production of the language. English is rather seen as one entity, which in combination with the open nature of the assignments create a climate in the classroom that would correlate with Krashen’s acquisition.
5.2.4 COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

There is a large selection of exercises that require communication and collaboration between pupils in *Blueprint*. The talk shows and team debates are obvious examples of assignments that require interaction, but *Blueprint* contains many other kinds of discussions and exercises where communication is needed. Even in individual assignments, such as writing a letter, there is sort of an element of communication since even though the letters are “fake”, the pupil must pretend that someone will receive it and he or she must thus communicate with this invented person and convey a message.

The kind of interaction that the teaching material offers is very natural. The pupils are allowed to communicate on their own terms and can use their own experiences as arguments and information. Dewey’s pragmatic theory is evident here; the students bring their own lives into school. It is equally visible in for example the “team debates”-exercises, where the pupils are supposed to act it out by being divided into teams that are strategically placed in the classroom with a chairman or moderator that controls the debate (ibid, 228). In this way, the pupils physically experience a team debate.

The possibilities that *Blueprint* provide for interaction and communication between students can be related to the learning environment that *Vygotskij* describes in his Zone of Proximal Development. The slower learners can learn, or “borrow knowledge” from those who are stronger. Also, there are no restrictions and no pressure of answering “correctly”; it is more important to take an active part in the interaction and use the language. Furthermore, the issues that are being dealt with are very much discussed in the world today. This urgency of the topics might, as Krashen wished for, result in a more natural communication.

5.2.5 *BLUEPRINT A, VERSION 2.0*’S AGREEMENT WITH LPF 94’S COURSE PLAN IN ENGLISH (REVISED IN 2000)

It is somewhat more difficult to decide if pupils can achieve their goals using *Blueprint* than it was to see if *Spin-Off* agreed with the corresponding plan from the 70’s. This is mainly because today’s materials have less detailed requirements regarding content. However, the material must provide certain possibilities that will lead the pupils towards the goals specified in the course plan.

In my opinion, *Blueprint* manages to do this. The material encourages different kinds of discussions; many of these involve the pupils’ personal experiences. It also features a variety of aspects of social conditions, such as Ireland during the 1930’s, Apartheid in South
Africa and neo-Nazism in Los Angeles today (ibid, 68, 194-200, 211-212). There are, however, perhaps not so many examples of cultural traditions in the past since the material is quite modern and seems to focus mainly on what is going on in the world today. Neither is much offered in terms of self reflection or assessment.

_Blueprint_ does not only offer a wide variety of different texts, but also of writing exercises of diverse types that encourage writing from different angles and with various focal points. In addition to this, the material includes assignments where the pupils must use other sources in order to retrieve information. I therefore believe that this teaching material provides a variety of opportunities that will lead the pupils towards the course plan’s goals.

### 5.3 A COMPARISON BETWEEN SPIN-OFF AND BLUEPRINT A, VERSION 2.0

This essay has focused on how the content of a course plan is mirrored in a teaching material as well as on to what degree the material stresses form and/or function and by which means. After the above analyses, we can conclude that there is a striking difference between _Spin-off_ and _Blueprint_. What one material focuses on, the other seems to lack and vice versa. _Spin-Off_’s focal point is the formal aspects of English. In _Blueprint_, form is in the background and the functional aspects of English dominate the exercises.

The texts in _Spin-Off_ have a very unnatural character with a language that clearly is intended to practice for example a certain tense or grammatical pattern whereas the texts featured in _Blueprint_ are more natural and deal with realistic topics that probably will engage the pupils more. The texts differ in style and the language is much more alike the English that actually is spoken and written in an English-speaking country.

The exercises are also poles apart. In _Spin-Off_, the individual exercises deal with grammar or check the pupils understanding, or perhaps memory, of the texts through yes/no-questions while the corresponding exercises in _Blueprint_ ask “what”, “how” or “why”. It also features countless assignments where interaction is essential and it invites the pupil to participate in discussions and contribute with his or her own thoughts. The pupils are not only encouraged to interact with each other, but also to communicate with the rest of society. There are very few pure grammatical exercises in _Blueprint_, which is probably because form merely is regarded as a tool in the course plan. It seems as if form was exercised to a much larger extent earlier when it was insisted upon in the course plan. On the whole, the assignments in _Blueprint_ are freer, more open and involve the pupil whereas the exercises in _Spin-Off_ are limited and thereby hinder the pupils’ progress, have a set ending point and rarely exercise communication.
The production of English orally or in writing is crucial in Blueprint. The method for learning English seems to be that the pupil reads or listens to a text that motivates and inspires him or her and finally implore the pupil to produce the language in different ways. In Spin-Off, the method is rather that the pupils read a text and learn English through repetition and exercising grammar. The pupil is seldom asked to produce the language on his or her own.

Spin-Off agrees with the course plan from 1970 since it satisfies the demands on both content and grammar. Indications of a transformation or glide from a focus on form to function - just as in the course plan - can be spotted in some exercises in Spin-Off that invite rather than control the pupil. Blueprint, on the other hand, mostly agrees with the relevant course plan, but there is a lack of self assessment tasks. The focus is definitely on communication, as the course plan requires, but the material includes certain exercises that deal more with form than function even though this is not explicit in the plan.

6 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION: FROM FORM TO FUNCTION

In this essay, I have analysed course plans and teaching materials with a focus on form and function in order to see in what direction they have changed and I have then tried to recognize why. What can be concluded from my analyses is that already in the 70’s, hints of a glide from a focus on form to a more communicative approach to English can be spotted in both the course plan and in Spin-Off. In the plan from 2000 and in Blueprint, it is evident that function and communicative abilities have become the core of language studies. The formal aspects of English are not mentioned in the new plan at all and only exercised to a small extent in the teaching material.

Should we be worried about the lesser amount of attention paid to form today? Are pupils today really learning the grammar of the language as “properly” as earlier? According to Liber’s market analyses, teachers want more visible grammar in teaching materials. This might be a protest against teaching materials as well as against today’s functionalised course plans – and then maybe even against Krashen’s acquisition? The reason for this want of form might perhaps be that the teachers have noticed that pupils have difficulties learning English without grammatical tools. Therefore, the attempts to “hide” grammar, as Granlund pointed out, might come to an end. Perhaps there will be a return to more typical grammatical exercises?
However, “hidden” exercises of form might actually make it easier for the pupils to learn it since they are not deterred by the horrible word “grammar”. However, it is at the same time practically decided that everyone can learn English just by practising the language. This can go terribly wrong since what someone “feels” is right, might be completely incomprehensible to others. Communication is not only about interacting; what someone says must, as Hymes maintained, be feasible and appropriate in order for others to understand it. For a slow learner or simply someone who is not a language person, it can be difficult to learn to communicate in comprehensible English without rules or guidelines.

Furthermore, for a pupil who aims to study English at a higher level leaves upper secondary school with very little knowledge of form and is unfamiliar with grammatical terminology, it might be very difficult for this pupil to carry out his or her studies at a university. My experience tells me that at higher levels, it is almost taken for granted that the students have a basic grammatical knowledge that is to be extended. Luckily, I had this knowledge when I began my studies at university, but many in my class did not have such a solid starting point as I did and they had difficulties adjusting to this “new” teaching of grammar. In my opinion, the teaching at universities is still quite traditional and more similar to learning than acquisition. This leaves a gap between upper secondary school and higher levels.

So the question is: is the shift in upper secondary school from learning about the language to actually learning it a purely positive shift? It seems that our governing documents – and teaching materials – have moved almost from one extreme to the other: from “the controlled” to “the free”. In my opinion, this is a sensible, valuable and necessary shift since the main goal of language studies is to learn a foreign language and use it, but at the same time I believe it is important not to overlook the more formal aspects. These are vital in order to have a comprehensible communication and I therefore think that grammar might be somewhat more stressed in the future, but still in the shadow of function. Form and function must be practised together because only then a pupil can produce sensible English. Unfortunately, I do not see such a balance in the course plan from 2000, where form has vanished in favour of function. Blueprint is, on the other hand, slightly more balanced.

That leads us to the content of teaching materials. Who or what other than the governing documents have influenced these in the past and who or what should have an impact on them in the future? According to Granlund, the publishing company considers many factors when creating a new material. This is possible today since the course plans do not enclose strict directions as earlier, which means that the range of texts and exercises that
can be used in a teaching material is exceedingly larger than in the 70’s. The new and more open guidelines have generated a market for teaching materials, and perhaps also competition between publishing companies that probably did not exist earlier. High-quality texts and exercises – as well as an attractive layout – become important in the battle for buyers.

There is consequently a great freedom in having more independent teaching materials, but there is also a risk: what if this market gives preference to other things than what is stated in the course plan? What should then be prioritised? What the course plan requires or, for example, what pupils find interesting, teachers find important or customers want to buy? Perhaps sell rates also affect a teaching material’s content, which might lead to popular teaching materials that possibly do not have a meaningful content. In my opinion, teaching materials – and perhaps also guiding documents? – ought to be a mix of what professionals (such as researchers and teachers) consider to be important and what the learners need in order to adopt this, perhaps certain type of presentation or structure. I believe this is the best way for teaching materials to have a meaningful content that the pupils can embrace.

However, in the end - no matter what teaching material we are discussing - it all comes down to what teachers and pupils make of it. Today there are many teaching materials to choose from, many ways to deal with these materials and there is also an immense selection of authentic material that the course plan nowadays allows us to use. For that reason, a teacher must be critical and be able to examine the material and analyze the possibilities it provides and what the pupils actually will learn from it. A teacher - who actually has more power over what the pupils learn than any governing document or teaching material since he or she is the direct link to the learners - must also find a balance between exercising form and function. I believe that this balance is the key to successful acquisition of English, and thereby also to an ability to use the language and develop communicative competence.
REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


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