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“Do I Teach What I Preach?”
A study on teachers’ beliefs and classroom practise for reading and reading strategies

”Lär jag ut som jag förespråkar?”
En studie om lärarens övertygelse och utövning om läsning och lässtrategier

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I want to dedicate this study to my sister who passed away while I was conducting this research. She was one of the people who inspired me to become a teacher and to investigate this subject matter. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Anna Wärnsby who has supported me with her insight through this writing process. Finally, I want to thank all who participated in this study. It would not have been possible without you.
Abstract

To operate in our modern society an individual need to possess a well-rounded reading ability, and to know of and use reading strategies is crucial for learners to develop this ability. The present study sets out to explore the beliefs of Swedish English teachers regarding the significance of reading and reading strategies. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate to what extent their classroom practice of teaching explicit reading strategies instructions is consistent with their beliefs. In this qualitative study, four 7-9 English teachers and two student groups participated. These come from two Swedish schools with different social-economic backgrounds. The data was collected by conducting content analysis of the teachers' lesson plans and conducting semi-structured interviews with both the teachers and students. The results show that the teachers express positive attitude to reading and reading strategies as they believe that these constitute essential elements in the communicative classroom. However, the results also indicate that the teachers’ actual classroom practice for reading strategies is not always consistent with their beliefs: for example, despite all teachers being positive to reading and reading strategies’ instruction, only the teachers from the school with lower social-economic background provide reading strategies’ instruction explicitly. Further, the results indicate that factors such as the teachers’ theoretical conceptions, time contraints, student composition and proficiency level, the school’s socio-economic background are the reasons for the teachers including explicit reading strategies’ instruction in their repertoire.

Key words. EFL/ESL, explicit instruction, metacognitive awareness, reading, reading comprehension, reading strategies, socio-economic background, teacher beliefs.
# Table of contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
2. Aim and Research Questions .............................................................................................. 3  
3. Theoretical Background ...................................................................................................... 4  
   3.1 Terminology ...................................................................................................................... 4  
   3.1.2 Identifying reading strategies ...................................................................................... 4  
   3.1.3 Teachers’ Beliefs .......................................................................................................... 5  
3.2 Second language acquisition theories on reading and reading strategies ......................... 6  
   3.2.1 Krashen’s Input Hypothesis ...................................................................................... 6  
   3.2.2 Schema theory ........................................................................................................... 7  
   3.2.3 Cognition and metacognitive awareness .................................................................... 7  
3.3 Previous research on reading strategies and teachers’ beliefs ............................................ 8  
   3.3.1 The effect of reading strategies’ instruction on reading comprehension ................. 8  
3.4 Reading strategies in the syllabus for English .................................................................... 10  
4. Method ................................................................................................................................ 12  
   4.1 The participants .............................................................................................................. 12  
   4.1.2 Selection process ......................................................................................................... 13  
4.2 Choice of method and instruments for collecting data ....................................................... 14  
   4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews ...................................................................................... 15  
   4.2.2 Focus groups ............................................................................................................... 15  
4.3 Ethical considerations ....................................................................................................... 17  
4.4 Procedure .......................................................................................................................... 17  
4.5 Analysis of the collected data ........................................................................................... 18  
5. Results .................................................................................................................................. 19  
   5.1 School 1 ........................................................................................................................... 19  
   5.1.1 The teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies ........................................... 19  
   5.1.2 The teachers’ self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies instruction .......... 20  
   5.1.3 The students’ experiences of reading and reading strategies .................................. 22  
   5.1.4 Lesson plans .............................................................................................................. 23  
5.2 School 2 ............................................................................................................................ 23  
   5.2.1 The teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies ........................................... 23  
   5.2.2 The teachers’ self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies instruction .......... 25  
   5.2.3 The students’ experiences of reading and reading strategies .................................. 26  
   5.2.4 Reviewing lesson planning ....................................................................................... 27
1. Introduction

In a world of unlimited sources of information, many of which are in English, we need to emphasize the importance of efficient reading skills to be able to orient ourselves in modern society (Grabe, 2009, p.5). English is recognized as the world’s international language, as the number of non-native speakers using the language has surpassed the numbers of native speakers (Nauln, 2006). In the information society, it is essential also for learners of English to develop a well-rounded reading ability to be able to participate in a democratic society nationally and internationally. Moreover, this is in line with the European Parliament’s ambitions for life-long learning (2006/962/EG). Thus reading ability is a crucial factor for successful development of language skills (Khonamri & Karimabadi, 2015; Daviribina & Asl, 2017), there is no surprise that the Swedish syllabus for English stresses reading comprehension in the development of overall communicative skills (Skolverket, 2018a, p.33). However, to become a successful reader, learners need the knowledge and ability to apply valid reading strategies as the reading process is a convoluted procedure (Koukourikou, Manoli & Griva, 2018, p.196). Therefore, Skolverket (2017) emphasizes that students must be offered situations where they can develop and learn how to make use of different reading strategies (p.13).

With this in mind, one might believe that English teachers would possess theoretical knowledge regarding reading strategies and include explicit reading strategies’ instructions in their teaching repertoires. However, this is not always the case. Several studies indicate that teachers’ knowledge base of reading strategies is not unified (Koukourikou et al., 2018; Çakici, 2016). Moreover, Lundahl (2019) argues that there is no agreement on what would count as a valid reading strategy either (p.282). Therefore, teachers might believe that they are including reading strategies in their classroom practice, but in actuality they are not. Furthermore, based on my own educational experience at a university level, teacher students receive superficial training at best on how to explicitly teach reading strategies. These factors not only may impede some learners’ development of their reading comprehension ability, but also may hamper the school system’s efforts to create equivalent education opportunities for all (see Skolverket, 2018a, p.6).
This becomes even more relevant today in a Swedish context as Skolverket (2018b) published a survey analyzing equivalence in Swedish compulsory schools, which illuminated that pupils’ socio-economic background and school segregation influence their school results, which is of course deeply problematic. In connection to this, research indicates that families’ socio-economic background has strengthened its effect on Swedish students reading achievement over the years (Hansen, Rosén & Gustafsson, 2011, p.207). Hence, it is even more crucial for teachers operating in these schools with students with lower socio-economic backgrounds to include reading strategies, to give them the necessary tools to develop their reading ability and to be able to fulfill an equivalent education.

Furthermore, according to Bamanger and Gashan (2010), teachers’ beliefs can be a crucial element for teacher to decide if or not to include reading strategies in their classroom practice. However, research also indicates that there is an inconstancy between teachers’ beliefs and their practice, meaning that beliefs impact on teachers’ classroom interaction varies study to study (Khonamri & Salim, 2010; Bamanger & Gashan, 2014). With this in mind, and the increasingly interest of examining the correlation between teachers’ beliefs and in which manner it can influence the essence of teaching, it is important to investigate this correlation further as there is a disagreement among researchers.

Therefore, with the presented background, this study investigates the relations between Swedish English teachers’ beliefs and their practices of teaching reading strategies. Furthermore, this study includes teachers operating at different schools with dissimilar socio-economic backgrounds. This was inspired by Skolverket’s (2018b) survey regarding equivalence in Swedish compulsory schools. As pupils’ socio-economic background plays an even bigger role today in connection to their school results, there is an even bigger emphasis that teachers must continue adapting their teaching practices to pupils’ needs for the school to be truly compensatory to be able to even out the odds between schools. Working with reading comprehension and reading strategies may be one of the strands for such development.
2. Aim and Research Questions

This paper examines compulsory school teachers’ beliefs on implementing reading strategies in the English communicative classroom, their practice and their students’ appreciation of reading instruction. The research questions are:

1. What views do the teachers express regarding reading and reading strategies and their effect on learners’ reading comprehension ability?

2. In what way do teachers describe their practice?

3. To what extent does the students’ experience correlate with the teachers’ practice?

4. To what extent is explicit reading strategies’ instructions visible in the teachers’ lesson plans?

5. What factors affect the teachers practice for reading strategies’ instructions, and is students’ socio-economic background one of these influence factors?
3. Theoretical Background

This section provides relevant theoretical tenets for understanding the key concepts for this study: terminology, theories of second language acquisition, findings from previous research and the Swedish curriculum.

3.1 Terminology

The three key terms used throughout this study are reading comprehension, reading strategies, and teacher beliefs.

3.1.1 Reading comprehension

Reading is a convoluted procedure that initiates various skills and processes. In his research synthesis, Grabe (2009) claims that reading comprehension is divided into two separate processes, which are the lower-level processes and higher-level processes (p. 21-58). The lower-level processes include language structure: syntactic and semantic knowledge, and word recognition. The lower-level processes may often impede reading comprehension in a second language (L2) since learners often are considerably less exposed to their L2 than to their first language (L1). The higher-level processes include serval items such as the ability to connect old and new information, reason and summarize with the goal of understanding and reconstruct information from the text in line with the writer's intentions. Depending on the readers' prior knowledge and goals, the interpretation and understanding of a text can differ between readers. When engaging in reading, both processes are needed for comprehension to occur (Grabe, 2009, p. 40-44).

3.1.2 Identifying reading strategies

In an English classroom context, there are various reading strategies that teachers can include. These strategies can be applied in different situations and can be both individual and interactive. Lundahl (2019) claims that reading strategies are difficult to define; he further states that it may be difficult to distinguish effective reading strategies from less effective ones (p. 283). However, Grabe (2009) outlines several goals for reading strategies: adjusting the reading to the purpose, monitoring one’s reading and being aware when comprehension
errors arise, identifying and concluding key elements, guessing the meaning of unknown words, connecting different passages in the text, and knowing when to reread a certain part (p. 228). He also asserts that reading strategies can be taught to be used separately or multiple strategies can be taught to be used simultaneously (p. 209, 231). Even if individual reading strategies, such as forming questions to the text, have been proven beneficial for readers, Grabe stresses that teachers should instead strive to teach multiple strategies to be applied simultaneously (cited in Lundahl, 2019, p. 284). Finally, active reading is another central concept; therefore, Lundahl (2019) argues that students should be aware of their interactions with a text: for learners to be aware of reading strategies, how and when to use them, may prompt the development of their reading abilities (p. 286).

3.1.3 Teachers’ Beliefs

Richardson (2003) states that beliefs as a general term can be defined as “psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 2). Some beliefs are less central, while others are more fundamental: the latter are more crucial for decision making (p. 2). In the research field of education, teachers’ or teaching beliefs are seen as important for teachers’ thought processes or conceptions: their knowledge and prior experience of lesson planning and outcomes affect their actual planning and interactive actions in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986, pp. 10-11). Moreover, Burns (1996) defines teachers’ beliefs as theories of practice, constituting the basis for “[…] decision making and teaching behaviour in the language classroom” (p. 174). Furthermore, these theories of practice are significantly influenced by multilevel context: teachers’ beliefs can be unpacked as contextualized premises, prior experience in their lived world, and theoretical conceptions that subsequently lead to actual classroom practices on different levels (Burns, 1996, p. 175). Calderhead (1996) further claims that teachers’ beliefs are closely related to subjects they teach, as well as to the relevant curriculum (cited in Bamanger & Gashan, 2014, p. 15). In an ESL teacher’s context, the more relevant an element is for developing learners’ language proficiency, the more impact it has on teachers’ beliefs. Whether the teachers’ beliefs on reading strategies influence their actual classroom practice is discussed in the next section.
3.2 Second language acquisition theories on reading and reading strategies

Researchers advocate for a varying amount of instruction on different components in second language acquisition (SLA). In the following, I have selected three of the various SLA theories to illuminate the development of reading ability. This selection is based on the applicability to the field of study of reading abilities and reading strategies, and how well they correlate the Swedish syllabus for English. The first theory, Krashen’s input hypothesis, emphasises the relevance of comprehensible input for language acquisition. As learners cannot develop their reading abilities without exposure to reading input, the theory is highly relevant. The second theory, Nunan’s (2003) perception of Bartlett’s Schema Theory, identifies prior knowledge as a key component when engaging in any kind of reading activity. Lastly, metacognition is essential for overcoming obstacles in language learning and specifically relates to reading strategies.

3.2.1 Krashen’s Input Hypothesis

For a learner to develop their reading comprehension ability, they must be exposed to reading input. Krashen (1981, 1985) argues that language is acquired not by explicitly focusing on forms and rules, but rather on meaningful interaction: learners need to be exposed to language. The central idea for his Input Hypothesis is that a learner does not need to be subjected to explicit grammatical instruction to learn to decode language: if the input is comprehensive and comprehensible, it will be enough (Krashen, 1985, p. 2). By this, he claims that language can only be acquired when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that “contains structure that is ‘a little beyond’ where we are now” (Krashen, 2009, p. 21). In other words, reading input must be challenging in relation to the learners’ proficiency level to a certain degree.

However, although the importance of Krashen’s input hypothesis for SLA research is undeniable, several theorists have challenged his work (see Lightbown & Spada, 2014, p. 107). For example, McLaughlin (1987) argues that ensuring that the input is coherent with the given learners’ proficiency level is problematic, and the hypothesis, therefore, cannot be
reliably supported. Despite this criticism, Lightbown and Spada (2014) claim that the input hypothesis is still valid. They refer to previous research indicating that language acquisition through exposure to comprehension, can fosters learners’ language development to a certain point. After this point is reached, learners need to be guided through explicit instruction to be able to develop further (p. 107). This is in line with Koukourikou et al. (2018) arguments that to create favourable circumstances for learners to make use of their strategies, the reading input should preferably be slightly beyond the learners’ English proficiency level (p. 200).

3.2.2 Schema theory

Readers always interact with the text. During the 1920s, Bartlett started to develop the idea that learners have schemata: a mental structure determined by past experiences and prior knowledge which forms our views and understanding (cited in Ajideh, 2003, p.3). These structures allow learners to be guided through new experiences. Nunan’s (2003) suggests that the Schema Theory has two branches of language levels: a systematic level, “the phonological, morphological and syntactic element of language”; and a schematic level, representing background knowledge (p. 68). To put this in the context of reading, both these levels are needed to create meaning as neither the text nor the reader’s background knowledge can do that separately. However, also Schema Theory have received its share of criticism. For example, Perfetti (1986) claims that schemata’s effect on reading ability is a mental structure and therefore cannot be accessed directly. Meaning that schemata can vary among individuals and therefore there cannot be a conclusion on individuals’ general reading performance (cited in Andersson & Jansson, 2019, p. 9). However, other research still emphasises readers’ background knowledge as essential to the reading processes (see Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Ajideh, 2003).

3.2.3 Cognition and metacognitive awareness

To develop into a proficient and strategic reader, learners need to be aware when comprehension failures arise and how to overcome them: they must be aware of their cognitive processes. Andersson (2002) unpacks this as metacognitive awareness: “thinking about thinking” (p.3). Baker and Brown (1980) assert that “[...] effective readers must have some awareness and control of the cognitive activities they engage in as they read most
characterization of reading includes skills and activities that involve metacognition” (p. 6). Furthermore, Anderson (2002) highlights that to improve language performance, learners must possess the necessary metacognitive skills. Therefore, Andersson (2002) advocates for the five key components of metacognitive awareness to be included in educational situations: “(1) preparing and planning for learning, (2) selecting and using learning strategies, (3) monitoring strategy use, (4) orchestrating various strategies, and (5) evaluating strategy use and learning” (p. 3). Furthermore, Grabe (2009) argues that for learners to become strategic readers: for them to spot their own comprehension failures and resolve them through various reading strategies, metacognitive awareness is demanded (p. 54).

3.3 Previous research on reading strategies and teachers’ beliefs

This section is divided into two sub-sections presenting research on teacher beliefs about reading strategies and reading strategies’ instruction, and on how teacher beliefs may correlate with their practice.

3.3.1 The effect of reading strategies' instruction on reading comprehension

Reading strategies play an important role in developing learners’ reading comprehension abilities. However, Pressley and Harris (1990) state that learners may not be able to pick up strategies by induction; therefore, strategies must be taught explicitly (p. 31). Grabe (2009) further reinforces this claim by referring to research regarding explicit reading strategies instruction pointing to the inter-dependency between reading comprehension and the use of reading strategies (p. 52). Furthermore, Andersson and Jansson (2019) in a meta-analysis looked into ten studies with control and test group design examining the effect of explicit reading strategies instruction. In particular, they examined what effect collaborative strategic reading, metacognitive strategies, and concept mappings have on “overall reading comprehension, sub-skill development and metacognitive awareness” (p. 15). Based on eight of the ten studies analyzed, they confirmed that explicit reading strategy instructions positively affects reading comprehension ability (p. 30-31).
However, not all studies included in Andersson and Jansson's (2019) study resulted in satisfactory outcomes of their proposed reading strategy instruction. Ochoa and Ramirez's (2016) study which explore the effect of cognitive and metacognitive instruction, where the participants ESL students were explicitly taught how the strategies worked and how use them in numerous situations. However, their study resulted in a non-satisfactory outcome as the participants' mean score only slightly increased (p.658). They claim that the negative result was not based on the learners’ lack of reading comprehension, but rather in their low level of language proficiency, and therefore, in this particular circumstances the focus should be on linguistic features and form rather than reading strategies instructions (p.662). Nonetheless, the authors still acknowledge the possible effect of metacognitive awareness on reading comprehension ability.

3.3.2 From beliefs to practice

That teachers’ beliefs may mirror their practice is rather obvious. However, this is not always the case, and the extent of such correlation differs from study to study. Firstly, there is research that indicates that teachers’ actual practice does not mirror their beliefs in general. Basturkmen et al. (2004) examined the relationship between teachers’ beliefs on explicit instruction on form and their actual teaching practice. The authors drew the conclusion that there is an “inconsistent correlation between second language teachers’ beliefs and their actual classroom employment […]” (quoted in Bamanger & Gashan, 2014, p. 20). A similar conclusion where made regarding teachers’ beliefs on reading strategies and practice in Khonamri and Salim's (2010) research conducted in the Mazandaran Province. They claim that there is a complex relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their actual practice since their collected data indicates that the participating teachers emphasized the importance and essential need of implementing reading strategies, however their beliefs did not correlate to their self-reported practice (p. 105). On the other hand, Bamanger and Gashan (2014) study conducted in Saudi Arabia, demonstrate that Saudi EFL teachers’ beliefs reflect classroom repertoire regarding reading strategies instruction (p.19-20). With this, the authors suggest that Saudi EFL teachers’ beliefs significantly influence their classroom decisions. Further, Bamanger and Gashan claim that since beliefs impact on teachers’ pedagogical practice, to change their practice, teachers need to change their beliefs. Evidently, there is no obvious answer whether or not teachers’ beliefs determine their practices.
To explain the inconsistency between teachers’ beliefs and their practice, other factors must be examined. Firstly, Pressley and Harris (1990) report that, although the database of validated strategies expands continuously, teachers do not include learning strategies instruction as didactic research on how to teach them is scarce (p. 31-32). More recently, Eckerholm (2018) investigated Swedish 4-6 teachers’ perspective on reading comprehension and arrived at a similar conclusion. She reports that Swedish teachers fail to integrate effective reading strategies into their practice, and she argues that these shortcomings originate from the lack of knowledge and training (p. 165). Even if teachers possess knowledge regarding the effect of strategies, they do not know how to actualize it into a classroom activity. Similarly, Andersson and Jansson (2019) found that teachers’ educational backgrounds and attitudes affect the efficiency of reading strategies instruction for developing reading comprehension ability (p.27-28). For example, Koukourikou et al. (2018) report that in their research on collaborative reading strategies effect on reading comprehension ability, Greek teachers lack the knowledge of teaching reading strategies; furthermore, although they acknowledge strategies’ effect as they find explicit instructions to be time-consuming and favor traditional teaching instead (p. 205). Finally, although Khonamri and Salim (2010) pinpoint a lack of knowledge as an explanation for the mismatch between teachers' practices and beliefs, they also highlight “contextual factors and classroom life” to be of importance (p. 105). Student body composition, teacher and student attitudes and interests, time constraints, curriculum descriptions, and workload often override the teachers’ beliefs and often dictate teachers planning, choice of subject matter and practices.

3.4 Reading strategies in the syllabus for English

The syllabus for English stipulates that the overall goal for teaching English in Sweden is to develop overall communicative skills (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34). To reach this goal, learners’ reading ability is essential; therefore, reading is extensively mentioned in the syllabus, which calls for the inclusion of instruction on how to enhance students reading ability. One of the overall goals states that learners need to be able to “use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34). Furthermore, Skolverket (2018) clearly outlines, in both the core content and knowledge requirements, that reading strategies must be intergraded: “to facilitate their understanding of the content of the spoken language
and texts, pupils can choose and apply a strategy for listening and reading” (p. 39). To aid teachers further, Skolverket (2012) released guidelines regarding learning strategies in English and modern languages, where they highlight that teachers should show students when and how strategies can be used (p. 2). Skolverket (2012) also stipulates that pupils should learn several reading strategies since different strategies must be applied depending on the reading purpose (p. 5).

On the other hand, in Skolverket’s (2019) draft for possible changes in the future curriculum, learning strategies are not included in the overall goals anymore. Moreover, in the knowledge requirements, only interaction strategies are exclusively mentioned, while reading strategies are only outlined in the core content. Admittedly, assessing learners' use of reading strategies is a difficult task since learners’ use of reading strategies and its effect on their reading comprehension cannot simply be detected directly (Green, 2013, p 96). Hence, Green (2013) argues that teachers must identify learners’ comprehension ability through assessing their production in speech or writing. To alleviate this difficulty in assessment, Lundahl (2019) suggests that the task design should include questions prompting students to also present how they processed a specific text (p. 299).
4. Method

This study adapts a qualitative approach. To answer the research questions, I have chosen to collect three data sets: semi-structured interviews with English teachers, focus group interviews with pupils, and the teachers’ lesson plans. By including more than one data set, I expect to increase validity through data triangulation (Alvehus, 2013). Adopting a method design may increase the reliability of my interpretation of the data (Dörnyei, 2007). The following section discusses and describes the methodological considerations for collecting the empirical data: the participants and their selection process, the chosen methods to empirical data collection, ethical considerations, the data collection and analysis procedures.

4.1 The participants

Four female English teachers from two different schools willingly participated in this project. The four teachers (See Table 1) remain anonymous and are given aliases as Teacher A and B. Table 1 also includes the teachers’ varied work experience, their classes, subjects and dates for the interviews. The two schools are both located in the same municipality in the south of Sweden. School 1 is located in a suburban area with high socio-economic status. School 2 is located in the urban area with mixed social-economic status, but predominately on the lower end of the scale. Combining these annotations, in the remainder of the paper, I use Teacher 1A and 1B for those in School 1, and Teacher 1B and 2B for those in School 2.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Grades they currently teach in English</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>Date of conduction the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1A</td>
<td>English, Swedish and French</td>
<td>8th graders</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>09 October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1B</td>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>9th graders</td>
<td>6 year</td>
<td>11 October 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 9 participating students were 8th and 9th graders. The 8th graders from School 1 were students from Teacher 1A’s English class. This focus group contains 2 girls and 2 boys. The 9th graders are from School 2 and belong to Teacher 1B’s class: 4 girls and 1 boy. Participating students from School 1 will receive a number code 1a to 1d, and students from School 2 will be coded 2a to 2e with additional 1 or 2 at the beginning of the code for Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 (see Table 2). Even if the gender is included in the table, it is not used as an analysis variable.

Table 2  
Participating students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1 8th graders</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School 2 9th graders</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1a</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Student 2a</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1b</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Student 2b</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1c</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Student 2c</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1d</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Student 2d</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student 2e</td>
<td>Boy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview date: 21 November 2019

4.1.2 Selection process

To fulfil the aim of this study, I involved both 7-9 English teachers and their students. When starting this research, I reached out to five different schools in the search of volunteer English teachers. Three teachers responded positively from the beginning, and I recruited the fourth teacher while visiting one of the schools. The choice of teachers is what Bryman (2011) categorises as a targeted selection: the aim is to investigate individuals who work and operate in an educational setting (p. 350). However, the selection of the teachers was based on
convenience due to time constraints. To avoid a homogenous sample, English teachers from two schools situated in different locations and with dissimilar socio-economic conditions were asked to participate. This resulted in a more heterogeneous sample, and therefore, contributes to more nuanced results (Alvehus, 2013, p. 68-69). Moreover, including schools with different locations and socio-economic precondition allowed for an additional contextual comparison in the analysis, particularly in relation to the teachers’ compensatory duties. To be able to identify the socio-economic backgrounds of the schools, I used Skolverket’s (2017b) SALSA index, which is an analytical tool correlating end-of-school-year grades to student body composition. SALSA variables are parents’ educational level, students’ immigration background and if they are newly arrived in Sweden, among others (p. 1). SALSA indexes are available at most municipals’ official homepages.

Furthermore, Dalen (2007) emphasizes the importance of creating a comprehensive picture of a phenomenon; in particular, he argues that children’s/students’ experiences and perspectives should be included when educational situations are investigated (p. 24). Including students in this study may help verify and add nuance to the teachers’ self-reported practices of reading strategies instruction. In addition, Dalen (2007) claims that including more than one group of informants can provide rich data and enhance the study's reliability (p. 61). To recruit students, I used the so-called snowball sample (snöbollsurval): an approach when a researcher contacts a responder in an organisation, who then passes forward the information to suitable contacts (Bryman 2011). In this case, the responders were two of the teachers who engaged some of their students. The teachers received a form with all necessary information about the study and passed it on to the students and their legal guardians. Furthermore, due to time constraints, the teachers were asked to contact those students who were likely to respond promptly. Teachers handpicking the students, may have affected the results.

4.2 Choice of method and instruments for collecting data

For this qualitative research, the main empirical data is based on the interviews with the four English teachers. As the research questions are revolved around teacher beliefs and practice, the focus group and analyzing of lesson plans provide as a complementing data set to increase the reliability of the interpretation of the teacher interviews.
4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

To investigate teachers’ beliefs regarding reading and reading strategies, the core method for this paper is semi-constructed interviews. Kvale (2007) states that a qualitative interview should not focus on fixed categorization as in quantitative interviews but rather on themes, so the interviewee can give open-ended answers based on their lived experience (p. 11-12). Qualitative research aims to capture “qualitative knowledge as expressed in normal language” (Kvale, 2007, p.11). Furthermore, Kvale suggests that questions should both revolve around thematic and dynamical dimensions, to stimulate mutual interaction and production of knowledge during the interview (p.58). Including these dimensions aims to create a relaxed environment and signal that there are no correct answers. Therefore, the questions for the interview I have crafted beforehand were divided into three themes: (a) education and work experience, and general view regarding strategies; (b) views on reading and reading strategies and their effects on learners’ reading comprehension abilities; (c) explicit reading and reading strategies instruction, and assessment of student use of reading strategies (see Appendix E for details). The order of the questions was not fixed, and the order of the open-ended and follow-up questions was determined by the answers given, which correlates well with Kvale’s (2007) suggestions regarding the openness of sequence (p.58).

Furthermore, I piloted the interview questions in preparation to this study. Nunan (1992) recommended this so that the interviewer may identify which questions work, need to be rephrased, or should be removed entirely (p. 151). The pilot interview rendered rich and useful data, and no changes were subsequently made in the interview guide; therefore, this data subset is included in this study (see data from Teacher 2A). The possible inclusion of pilot data is discussed in Trost (1997), who reports that this is not traditionally done. On the other hand, Trost (1997) adds that all available data should be used, as long as it is useful and having been collected correctly.

4.2.2 Focus groups

With the students, I used focus group interviews. Kvale (2007) suggests that the purpose of focus groups is to bring forth a different viewpoint on a subject matter (p. 71). The inclusion of students in this study is to complement the teachers’ perspectives since students can
experience an educational situation differently from a teacher. Furthermore, the students’ answers can confirm or contradict the teachers’ self-reported practice, enforcing the reliability of the interpretation of teacher interviews. The structure of the group interviews was non-directive, and the interviewer acts as a moderator, introducing the topics for discussion (see Kvale 2007). Similarly, to the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews were organized around the three themes: a) general views about reading; b) student experience of reading tasks; c) student experience of reading strategies. The last theme is obviously central to answering my research questions, but the other themes are designed to prompt relevant answers (see Appendix F for details).

Furthermore, I conducted the interview in Swedish to avoid performance anxiety among the students, and, consequently, the disruption of the groups’ dynamics. In addition, Trost (1997, pp. 25-27) highlights several issues of importance for focus group interview format. Firstly, interview questions must be designed to avoid sharing sensitive information to maintain professional secrecy since interviewees can easily share what have been said with outsiders. Secondly, the focus group size must be monitored to ensure solid documentation as it can be difficult to reconstruct from a recording who said what in a big group. According to Trost’s recommendation, I have chosen to limit the group size to a maximum five participants.

4.2.3 Lesson plans’ analysis

The two teachers whose students have been interviewed, provided their lesson plans for analysis. Including the teachers’ lesson plans aimed at complementing their self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies’ instruction. Since creating a lesson plan with clear links to aims and goals, and a number of aligned specific and specified activities is one of a teacher’s many responsibilities (Hedge 2008, pp. 30-31), including lesson plans was rather natural given the focus of this paper. However, for several reasons – for example, attending students’ specific needs in that certain moment – teachers often deviate from their lesson plans. According to Farrell (2005), “decision making is a dynamic process involving the teachers making choices before, during, and after each lesson” (p.32). With this in mind, the analysis of the lesson plans complements the teachers' self-reported practices, rather defines these practices.
4.3 Ethical considerations

This study follows Vetenskapsrådet’s (2002) guidelines for conducting research. The four main concepts that were followed are 1) information requirement, 2) the consent requirement, 3) the confidentiality requirement, and 4) the requirement of usage (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, p. 7-13). Firstly, I contacted the potential teacher participants through e-mail containing a participation form (see Appendices A and B) informing them of the project’s purpose, voluntary participation and the possibility to disengage at any time. However, some content-related information was withheld. As Kvale (2007) warns, including a detailed purpose may unduly affect the data (p. 27); therefore, a short debriefing took place after the interview. Secondly, to meet the confidentiality requirement, I provided assurances that the participants, the school and municipality will remain anonymous at all times, and that their data will not be made available to outsiders. Finally, to fulfill the requirement of usage, I informed the interviewees that the data was only to be used for this paper and was to be destroyed upon publication. Furthermore, at the start of the project, I contacted the so-called “gatekeepers” (Dalen, 2007, p.37): in this case the gatekeepers were the principals, who were informed of the purpose of this study and gave their permission for the study to be conducted in their schools; and the parents/legal guardians, who apart from having been informed also received a targeted consent form (see Appendices C and D).

4.4 Procedure

The first interview was conducted in May, while the rest were carried out during October and November 2019. The procedure for all the interviews was more or less constant. The teacher interviews were conducted for about 25 minutes at a location chosen by the interviewee (workplace in three cases, and private apartment in one). All the interviews were in English. In hindsight, however, this choice can have impeded some of the interviewees since they may not have been able to express themselves as freely in English as they would have done in Swedish, their L1. Furthermore, all the interviews were audio-recorded using iPhone’s Voice Memo app. In addition, to complement the recordings, I took notes to highlight certain phrases, body language, facial expressions or anxiety shown. However, this was only done
sparingly to avoid interrupting the flow of the conversation (Kvale, 2007, p. 94). As suggested by Kvale (2007), after the interviews, I offered a short debriefing on the interview topic and the interviewee themselves (p.56).

For student focus groups interviews, I sought assistance of the teachers. Two teachers volunteered their help, and quickly reached out to the students and their parents. After having received the consent forms, I decided together with the teachers on the possible interview dates. Both the focus group interviews took place during regular class hours and took place in a smaller group room. Before the interview, the students were briefly informed of the purpose and procedure. The students were able to ask own questions before the interview as well. The student interviews were in Swedish, so the students were not impeded by their language proficiency levels.

4.5 Analysis of the collected data

After the data collection, I proceeded with data analysis. Firstly, I transcribed the data. According to Kvale (2007) the researcher must take an informed decision on how to code data (p. 95). For this study, I made the standard choice to use a broad orthographical transcription, excluding filler words such as “eh”, false starts, pauses, false starts, frequent repetition of information (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I also made use of the notes taken during each interview during the transcription process. Furthermore, as the focus group interviews were conducted in Swedish, and used direct quotes are translated to English. While transcribing, I noticed that certain, potentially important statements were unclear. In such cases, I asked the teachers in question for clarification. Furthermore, I devised the coding schema for the identification of the participants (see Tables 1 and 2). Moreover, I colour-coded the emerging themes to facilitate the analysis. This falls under the “constant comparative method”, which is the process of finding similarities and contrasts in the data (Dalen, 2007, p. 50). Student interviews and lesson plans complemented my analysis of the teacher data set.
5. Results

For clarity of presentation, this section is divided into two sections representing the two schools. These two sections in turn consist of four subsections: the teacher interviews, the student focus group interviews, and lesson plans.

5.1 School 1

School 1 has 400 students from grade F-9 and is located in a suburban area with a high social-economic status (on the positive spectrum on the SALSA index). The two teachers interviewed from School 1 are Teacher 1A and Teacher 1B (Table 1), and the students in the focus group are all Teacher 1A’s students.

5.1.1 The teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies

Teacher 1A and 1B expressed that learning strategies enable student communicative development. Teacher 1B emphases strategies “is something [students] have to learn at an early age”. Teacher 1B further states that students today lack the necessary tools to overcome obstacles. Hence, they need strategies to do so. On strategies in the steering documents, Teacher 1A surmises that they are included to increase student awareness, as strategies help reach all the knowledge requirements.

Both teachers agreed that reading is important since it strongly affects communication. They state that reading enhances their pupils’ vocabulary and fluency. Teacher 1B further suggests that reading input gives students “the tools they need to talk and to continue talking” when learners engage in conversation. Teacher 1A concurs and suggests that reading has significant impact on oral and written communication: “to be good at communicating, you have to be a good reader”. However, discussing what abilities are needed to be a proficient reader, the teachers highlighted different abilities. Teacher 1B argues that the learners need to be able to read between the lines: “certain background and knowledge to understand” are needed to be a proficient reader; instead, Teacher 1A argues that students need to be patient when reading, make use of strategies, and adjust their reading to the reading purpose.
When connecting reading strategies to reading comprehension, Teacher 1A discusses that reading strategies are the tools that enable students to overcome comprehension failures. Both teachers gave the example of strategies’ effect on understanding the whole context of a text, even when a student’s vocabulary is insufficient. Both teachers asserted that learners need strategies to be their own detectives, figure out unknown words and identify key elements. When discussing this question, Teacher 1A addresses the topic of developing reading strategies unintentionally. She speculated that learners’ exposure to extramural English has forced them into situations where they must develop and use strategies intuitively. Teacher 1A stressed the importance and difficulties of selecting the right reading input directed to the learners’ proficiency levels. However, when asked if the learners’ proficiency level play a role in this intuitive development, the teachers’ beliefs differed somewhat. While Teacher 1B argued that less proficient students need help to develop strategies and learn to use them, Teacher 1A was more ambivalent. Although she concurred that proficiency level has certain impact, she argued that the two key components are the continuity of engaging in reading activities and the difficulty level of the input: if the text input is aligned with the learners’ language level, they will develop and use reading strategies unintentionally.

5.1.2 The teachers’ self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies instruction

Both Teacher 1B and Teacher 1A prefer to engage their students in quiet reading activities. Furthermore, Teacher 1A stated that she sometimes tries to create book circles, so the students can practice reading aloud. She argues that reading aloud is beneficial since the students can hear themselves talking and supports authentic communication. However, Teacher 1A still prefers silent reading over reading aloud because in her experience students are not completely comfortable in such group activities. Anyhow, the input used during silent readings is often a short text – newspaper articles, short texts from the internet, and in some rare cases short stories. Teacher 1A argues that there is not as much time for reading in the English classroom as there is in the Swedish classroom, where she uses more complex fiction texts since she can dedicate more time to developing reading abilities. In the English classroom, short texts are more feasible due to time constraints. Furthermore, Teacher 1B points out that after every occasion the students read a text, they receive content questions, through which she is able to assess student reading comprehension.
Discussing the integration of reading strategies into her instruction, Teacher 1B explained that the reading strategies she finds useful to teach and learn are how to use dictionaries, write down words students do not yet understand, and how to skim through a text. She continues by adding that the usefulness of a strategy depends on the purpose of the reading activity. Teacher 1A highlights skimming, interactive reading strategies, strategies that help to understand the whole context. She finds it important to be able to choose certain input suitable for student reading proficiency levels. Neither of the teachers could use professional terminology for the strategies apart from skimming, even when explicitly prompted.

The teachers were somewhat vague about their practices. Teacher 1B was more straightforward: “I am not working with reading a lot right now”. She reasons that her current 9th graders rather need to focus on grammar and form. However, when asked to what extent she has included explicit reading strategies instruction previously, she was not explicit. There was only one particular statement in the interview pertaining to the issue. When she discussed reading strategies in the knowledge requirements, Teacher 2A stated that “[the learners] don’t even know what a strategy means”. This can be tentatively interpreted as an indication that the extent of her teaching reading strategies explicitly is only marginal. Teacher 1A’s answers were even more difficult to interpret. When asked to what extent she explicitly teaches reading strategies, she as well replied with only examples of activities and tasks where strategies could be implemented. Therefore, there was a need to contacted Teacher 1A for clarification, and she reported that she did not “dedicate lessons for teaching reading strategies” in her English classroom but did so in her Swedish classroom (personal communication, 25 November 2019). She further explained that this decision was based on time constraints. Although both teachers work with activities where reading strategies can be applied, they seem not to offer explicit reading strategies instructions to any significant extent. During the interview, Teacher 1A stressed that she would have appreciated further education on reading strategies as she believes that a lot have changed since she started to teach English.

Finally, when discussing how they identify and assess the use of reading strategies, both Teacher 1A and Teacher 1B got quite anxious based on their hesitation and body language. Both teachers agreed that it was hard. Teacher 1A phrased this difficulty as follows: “I cannot confirm their use if I don’t talk to each and every student after every project, or class even”. Furthermore, the teachers agreed that they did not assess the use of reading strategies as an
isolated ability. The two of them stated that they integrated the criteria of using reading strategies in the final grade when assessing learners’ reading ability. Teacher 1B argued that if students complete a task or answer a question correctly, they must have made use of a strategy to do so. Teacher 2A became quite engaged in the topic of assessment, asking whether I was aware of any relevant research, or had some useful information from my teacher education programme.

5.1.3 The students’ experiences of reading and reading strategies

When the students started discussing what reading means to them and why it is important to be able to read, their first associations were related to the sphere of education. However, the further they discussed, the more they connected good reading abilities to their everyday lives. Student 1c expressed that “when you grow older, there are a lot of things you can’t do if you can’t read”, with which the other students agreed eagerly. When asked how they worked with reading during their English lessons, the students reported that they mostly worked with silent reading and reading comprehension tasks. After working with different text types, the students often experienced content discussions. They were not certain whether these tasks improved their reading abilities. Three of the students thought so, but one student offered a more nuanced answer. She claimed that reading tasks developed her vocabulary, but not her reading comprehension. Moreover, all students agreed that they would like to work more with reading in their English classes. For instance, one of the students claimed that that due to the sheer amount of extra-mural exposure to English, it was “[…] even more important to be able to read in English”. The students also stated that they would like to choose their own reading input, motivating it that if they read a text in a genre they are interested in, they will be more motivated and engaged to continue reading.

When addressing reading strategies, the students articulated the need for strategies to help them read better and understand content as a whole. During this conversation, they talked about figuring out a word by looking for clues in the context, and one student mentioned asking own questions to monitor comprehension. If the student failed to answer these questions, he read though certain passages again, or discussed the matter with a fellow classmate. Although all students claimed that reading strategies are essential to develop their reading comprehension abilities, they also argued that they do not need to receive any explicit training. The students reported having developed their own strategies since they have been
readers from the early age. One student, in particular, highlighted “that you can find [reading strategies] yourself by reading more”.

5.1.4 Lesson plans

Teacher 1A’s lesson plan for a reading project included length of the project, description of the intended work area, homework instructions final examination, and connection to the knowledge requirements and core content. The intended work area focused on irregular verbs and reading the book *Walkabout*. This could be interpreted as a reading project aimed to develop grammar use, vocabulary and reading comprehension ability. Furthermore, the homework was in form of a verb list, and the final examinations were a written test on various verbs and a book talk. In relation to the book talk, a bullet list of what the students were expected to present during these conversations was included in the lesson plan. The only evidence of sequencing was the selected dates for the homework and the final examinations. Moreover, the only explicit reading activities were the reading assigned for the class, and a group conversation about the content. The strategies are mentioned in the knowledge requirements and core content section of the lesson plan. However, these are production strategies, while reading strategies are absent.

5.2 School 2

School 2 has around 600 students from grade F-9 is located in an urban area of, arguably, a mixed social-economic status, leaning towards the lower spectrum (on the negative spectrum on the SALSA index). The interviewed teachers from this school were Teacher 2A and Teacher 2B, and the students in the focus group were from Teacher 2A’s English class. It must be stated that these particular students may not be representative of the student body in this school in general.

5.2.1 The teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies
Both Teacher 2A and Teacher 2B agreed that strategies in general are very important for all students’ language development. Teacher 2A stressed that strategies are essential to the learning process, in particular for “students with difficulties”. Furthermore, as the majority of Teacher 2B’s students do not have Swedish as their L1, she argues it is crucial for them to make use of strategies to be able to succeed in school. Moreover, Teacher 2B also looks beyond the sphere of education, stating that if learners obtain effective strategies, they may become better citizens in general. Correlating strategies to the steering documents for English, both teachers stated that strategies are an important tool to overcome language obstacles and should be included in the steering document for all subjects.

Both teachers considered reading in the communicative classroom important. For example, Teacher 2A highlights that “students that spend a lot of time reading actually make much better result than other”. Further, Teacher 2B added that reading is one of the essential sources for the learners to develop their vocabulary in both written and oral production. Teacher 2A stated that to be a proficient reader, students need a broad vocabulary and different reading strategies. She particularly stressed the importance of reading strategies for students’ reading comprehension abilities. Although Teacher 2B also mentioned these abilities, she stressed the importance of being accustomed to reading instead: the students’ childhood experiences of reading have a major impact on whether they become readers.

Both teachers stated that reading strategies help the students to identify key concepts, making them comprehend the entire text, even if they do not understand every single word. Teacher 2B stressed that “strategies help the students to get a helicopter perspective over the text”. Finally, Teacher 2A claimed that student awareness of different reading strategies and in which context they should be used is key to reading comprehension. In addition, both teachers considered inadvertent, intuitive acquisition of reading strategies possible. For example, Teacher 2A argues that the students develop strategies naturally “in order to survive”. Furthermore, while Teacher 2B believes that more proficient students have an easier time developing reading strategies unintentionally since they are more motivated to do so, Teacher 2A adds that proficiency level is not a significant factor in this case. She further argues that proficiency level only determines how the strategies take shape, not that they are learned.
5.2.2 The teachers’ self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies instruction

The teachers’ practices were to a certain degree dissimilar. When Teacher 2B engages her students in reading activities, she prefers to use a TPS (Think, Pair, Share) structure, which includes both reading silently and aloud. Allowing the learners first to read a text by themselves and then proceed to reading aloud what they have just read silently stimulates the reading comprehension process. Regarding the reading input, Teacher 2B’s pupils engage with shorter texts: news articles and short stories. Teacher 2B highlights the challenge of selecting input that suits all her learners, as their reading proficiency varies tremendously: she has students “that can read Dickens right now”, and “those who need small children’s books”. When Teacher 2A received the same question, she reported that she prefers to engage her students in interactive and read-aloud activities over silent reading. The reason behind this is that she strongly believes that when the students read silently, “you lose a lot of students”. Furthermore, Teacher 2A suggests that “it is important to listen to words, taste words, hear your own voice, pronounce words”. Reading aloud allows students to demonstrate their comprehension and stimulates their vocabulary development. Even when working with silent reading, she always includes an interactive activity, such as discussing or sharing interpretations of the content of the texts.

Although both teachers talked about including explicit reading strategies instruction, Teacher 2A offered the most straightforward answer. She included explicit reading strategies instruction in almost all reading activities. Furthermore, Teacher 2A claimed that she emphasized reading strategies even more during summer school since those students are in dire need of such knowledge and skills to use reading strategies. Teacher 2A emphasized the significance of using a text that is familiar and motivating, especially for the less proficient learners. She argued that if learners were exposed to a topic that they were familiar with and had a genuine interest in, they would make use of their strategies as they work on understanding the content. She gave the following example: “when they play their computer games, they read those difficult instructions because they are motivated to do it”. As most games are in English, to advance in the game, students must apply strategies to comprehend. In addition, when presenting her practice, Teacher 2A highlighted a handful of strategies that she teaches and believes being useful for the students to know: skimming, scanning, reading
between and beyond the lines, previewing and contextualizing. Contrary to the teachers in School 1, Teacher 2A used an abundance of professional terms for reading strategies.

Teacher 2B, on the other hand, reported that she did not teach explicit reading strategies. However, as the interview progressed and as she developed her thoughts, she realized herself that this was not true. Teacher 2B came to the conclusion that, although she did not dedicate a full lesson to explicit reading strategies instruction, she always tried to include segments of strategies instructions in conjunction to the reading activity. She continued explaining that she included reading strategies instruction when comprehension issues arose. Teacher 2B listed the reading strategies that she wants her students to master: monitoring and reviewing their own comprehension. Students need to be aware when their comprehension fails and how to overcome that certain obstacle. Although both Teacher 2A and Teacher 2B report including explicit reading strategies instruction, Teacher 2A would have appreciated further education in different methods of how to work and implement reading strategies in the most efficient way.

Lastly, when addressing the task of identifying and assessing student use of reading strategies, both Teacher 2A and Teacher 2B concede that assessing the use of reading strategies is a complicated process. Both teachers often engaged in dialogues with their pupils where they had to explain how exactly came to a specific conclusion. In these interactions, the teachers could to a certain extent confirm the use of reading strategies. Teacher 2B argued that even adults find it challenging to explain their thought processes. When discussing their assessment practices, both sighed deeply, while Teacher 2B admitted, “I don’t know if I do, and if I do, I do it unintentionally”. Similarly to the teachers in School 1, they argued that they do assess the use of strategies, but do not grade it as an isolated item but incorporate it into the grade that the students receive for a reading task.

5.2.3 The students’ experiences of reading and reading strategies

When the students from school 2 talked about reading, they immediately connected reading to be able to function in society. As their everyday lives are filled with written words wherever they go, they stress that it is a must to be a proficient reader. One student in particular emphasized the essential role of reading as she claimed, “if you can't read, then you are
disabled in life because that's how much you need it for”. When delving into how they experienced reading activities during English classes, the students offered a variety of examples: reading comprehension tasks, reviewing a text and selecting key elements, writing a short story continuing a text just read, and discussing the content of different text types. Furthermore, the students reported that they engaged both in reading aloud and silent reading. In this way, the students experienced that they developed not only their reading abilities, but also their speaking abilities as they practiced vocabulary and pronunciation as well. When asked if they would prefer more or fewer reading activities during class, all the students expressed that they were quite satisfied with reading activities in their classroom.

One of the students defined reading strategies as “a method, or way to be able to comprehend or understand when we are reading”. When discussing this topic, the students concluded that strategies are used to overcome obstacles, but also that different individuals learn in different ways and therefore may use different strategies. One student, for example, suggested that she comprehended a text most efficiently when she interacted with others, while some of the other students did not find this a useful strategy. Another student pointed out that she had to develop her own strategies throughout her life: “I hear Swedish at school and when I talk with friends, I speak Arabic when I’m home and the series I watch are in English”. Evidently, all the students agreed that reading strategies are needed to develop their reading abilities. When asked if they have received any teaching in explicit reading strategies instruction, they all reported that they have. They agreed that they had worked with different reading strategies before, during and after various reading occasions. One student added, “we have tried most of them, and then you find out which one that suits me”. In addition, another student pointed out that they often revised the different strategies when they are challenged with more difficult texts.

5.2.4 Reviewing lesson planning

Teacher 2A’s lesson plan for a reading project included a short description of the intended work area, connection to the core content and the knowledge requirements, and instructions for the first classroom activity. The lesson plan indicated that the intended work area was slavery in America during the 18th century, and reading from different chapters the novel Roots. From this, one could interpret the focus for the reading project to be on developing reading comprehension. There was very little evidence of sequence, besides the indicated
length of the entire project and the first reading activity. In the accompanying e-mail, Teacher 2A stated that she did not usually produce detailed lesson plans (personal communication, 15 December 2019). The instructions for the classroom activity specify that the students were to read aloud in smaller groups, and together figure out the content. Furthermore, the instructions admonish the students to “try to guess what difficult words means […] by using the context” and specify elements that they should have in mind during the reading process. Moreover, the instructions include information on what types of questions the pupils were to answer. These questions were labelled “on-the-line”, “between-the-line”, and “beyond-the-line”. While the lesson plan was connected to the core content and knowledge requirements, reading strategies where only mentioned in the core content.
6. Discussion

In the data, I was able to identify a number of patterns and themes. Firstly, to answer the first research question, I synthesize the teachers’ answers and connect them to relevant theories and previous research. Secondly, to answer to the second, third and fourth questions, I correlate the teachers’ beliefs to their self-reported practices and compare them to the student focus groups' answers and lesson plans. Thirdly, to answer the fifth question, I discuss the identified factors of influence.

6.1 Synthesizing teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies

All the teachers value strategies in general very highly since they consider strategies necessary for both reception and production/interaction acts. Teachers 2A and 2B stressed that strategies are essential to less proficient learners and must be included in their classroom practices. This is aligned with Skolverket’s (2012) recommendation to facilitate the use of strategies by low proficient language users (p. 2). This should promote learner autonomy and self-efficacy, which is one of the core purposes of learning English (Skolverket, 2012, p. 19).

All the four teachers considered reading a key component in the communicative classroom. In their experience, pupils who are proficient readers often excel at school work. Previous research also makes claims about the importance of reading in educational situations (Khonamri & Karimabadi, 2015; Daviribina & Asl, 2017). Moreover, both the teachers and researchers identified numerous skills and traits of proficient readers: background knowledge, the use of reading strategies, and awareness of vocabulary items (see Bamanger & Gashan, 2014, p. 15).

When the teachers claimed that reading strategies should facilitate different aspects of reading, most of these could be connected to Grabe’s (2009) criteria such as identifying key elements and figure out unknown words (cited in Lundahl, 2019, p.283). Furthermore,
Teachers 2A and 2B highlighted that students should be able to select different strategies depending on the context. This is closely related to metacognitive awareness, although the teachers never used the term themselves. According to Baker and Brown (1980), an essential component of reading is to be aware of one’s cognitive activities: “[…] most characterization of reading includes skills and activities that involve metacognition.” (p. 6). Most of the teachers’ claims were based on experience, but numerous statements could be connected to research and established theories, which demonstrates that the teachers also are aware of theories on reading and reading strategies. This suggests that Burn’s (1996) and Clark and Peterson’s (1986) suggestions that both experience and theoretical knowledge influence teachers’ beliefs are rather accurate. Beyond their experience and theoretical awareness, the teachers positive view of reading strategies may stem from the mention of these strategies in the steering documents. For example, Calderhead (1996) claims that steering documents form teachers’ beliefs, and the steering documents clearly state in the knowledge requirements that learners should “use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood” (Skolverket, 2018, p. 34).

6.1.1 The significance of specific reading input

All teachers claimed that the choice of input must be dictated by learners needs and should stimulate language proficiency development and provide as much exposure to language and different types of text as possible. Naturally, this is connected to Krashen’s (1980) Input Hypothesis. If the students are exposed to comprehensible reading input that is just a bit above their current level, they may according to Koukourikou et al. (2018) make use of their reading strategies. However, reading input alone can only stimulate language development to a certain degree. Lightbown and Spada (2014) advocate for explicit instruction as an important factor for language development. Therefore, even if the input is carefully selected, learners still need explicit reading strategies instruction from a teacher.

Furthermore, both the teachers and the students promoted the idea of input choice based on student interest to enhance student motivation and their reading processes. According to the Schema Theory, prior knowledge influences how learners interact with and understand a text. Even though Schema Theory is not connected to motivation per se, the participating students from School 1 emphasized the importance of their background knowledge on a topic for them.
to become motivated to continue reading. To proceed, learners’ prior knowledge constitutes a part of their higher-level cognitive processing and is essential in reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009). Moreover, student-oriented input is not only supported by research, but also specified in the steering documents. Skolverket states that educational situations should include “[i]nterests, everyday situations, activities […]” related to the learners lived world (Skolverket, 2018a, p. 36). Further, Skolverket (2012) argues that prior knowledge affects how the learners acquire linguistic features. However, in line with Perfetti (1986) critique of schemata as individual mental structures, two of the teachers argued that selecting appropriate input that suits all learners’ proficiency levels and interests is a difficult task, particularly when a classroom host students with widely diverse proficiency levels. Despite this difficulty, the teachers’ experiences suggest that reading strategies positively affect language development and are dependent on reading input.

6.2 The teachers’ beliefs vs their self-reported practices of explicit reading strategies instruction

Overall, the data suggest consistency between the teachers self-reported practices and their students’ experiences in the classroom. Although the teachers expressed similar beliefs, their self-reported practices differed between the two schools. Firstly, both teachers from School 1 considered reading essential for the students’ communication abilities. However, one of the teachers devoted some of her classroom time to reading tasks, while the other did not. Instead, that teacher focused on language development of her less proficient students through teaching grammar. Whether this choice increases language proficiency can be debated. On one hand, Krashen (1981) argues that exposure to comprehensible input provide language learners with sufficient grammatical input as well. Thus comprehensive reading input may facilitate also the development of essential syntactic and semantic knowledge. On the other hand, Grabe (2009) claims that L2 comprehension ability can be hindered their lower-level cognitive processes are lacking: word recognition, syntax and semantics. Furthermore, Ochoa and Ramirez (2016) pointed out that the less proficient learners are, the more difficulties they may experience with reading and applying reading strategies. Therefore, one could argue that teachers may be right in stimulating language development before trying to enhance their students’ reading comprehension abilities in cases of low levels of language proficiency.
In general, the teachers in School 1 reported teaching explicit reading strategies to a marginal extent, and what they considered reading strategies instruction may not correspond to what research identifies as reading strategies instruction. For example, one of the teachers concentrated on training her students to use dictionaries to find out the meanings of new words they encounter while reading. According to Skolverket’s (2017a, p. 13; 2012, p. 9) commentary material and guidelines on strategies, teaching students to use of dictionaries to detect unknown word counts towards being a valid strategy. However, using dictionaries and doing glossary tests fall rather under strategies for intentional vocabulary learning, not reading strategies. There is a difference between looking up a word and being able to figure it out in the context; only the latter is, according Grabe (2009), a valid reading strategy.

The teachers in School 2 practiced what they believed to a greater extent than those in School 1. The teachers in School 2 considered reading activities essential for language development, particularly in students with other L1s than Swedish, and included such activities often into their planning. They also demonstrated more explicit knowledge of reading strategies and could phrase their ideas using more professional terminology. This kind of practice correlates well with research claiming that well-rounded reading ability supports overall language development (Khonamri & Karimabadi, 2015; Daviribina & Asl, 2017). Moreover, this could be linked to Clark and Peterson's (1986) teachers' thought process concept, where experience and prior education form teacher beliefs, which later impact their practices. Meaning that both Teacher 1B and 2B’s lived experiences and outcomes with reading strategies in the classroom has influenced their beliefs, which then affected their decisions making to include reading strategies further. Moreover, as Grabe (2009) and others acknowledge, reading strategies are needed for learners to become proficient readers. Thus, the teachers from School 2 not only based their practice on experience in the given context, but also on their theoretical knowledge (see Burns, 1996 on pedagogical decisions). Although none of the teachers in School 2 use the term metacognitive awareness, their practice can be connected to Andersson's (2002) breakdown of the skills needed to develop metacognitive awareness: selecting strategies, monitoring, evaluating the strategy use. Moreover, Lundahl (2019) argues that making pupils aware of strategies can trigger their motivation and engagement, which may in turn lead to improved reading abilities (p. 289). Interestingly enough, the students in School 1, who have not received explicit reading strategies instruction to a significant extent, did not see the need in such instruction and identified themselves as readers regardless. The
students in School 2, who were consistently exposed to explicit reading strategies instructions, considered it important to develop as readers.

The data suggests that all teachers engaged their students in reading identified by previous research as stimulating development of reading abilities. For example, students were asked to be reading silently in preparation to group discussion. This is an effective sequence: students begin by thinking and reading individually and then continue by sharing interpretations and reflecting with peers; interaction is a valid tool to enhance reading comprehension ability (Andersson & Jansson, 2019, p. 28). This sequence of activities gives students a chance to share and apply different strategies.

6.3 Contextual factors

Research on the correlation of teacher beliefs and their practices does not provide consistent results. On one hand, Khonamri and Salim (2010) found the correlation between teacher beliefs and their practice lacking. On the other hand, Bamanger and Gashan (2014) demonstrate that teacher beliefs strongly affect pedagogical decision processes. Richardson (2003) suggests that the more fundamental a belief is, the more it affects decision making. For example, although the teachers from School 1 acknowledged the importance of reading strategies, perhaps their beliefs on reading strategies were not as central for them as these did not correlate to classroom activities. Surprisingly, the clear difference in the two schools’ socio-economic backgrounds, is mirrored in the differences in the extent of including reading tasks and explicit reading strategies instruction, and in the misalignment of teacher beliefs and their practices in the two schools. This suggests that the differences should be explicated in context.

6.3.1 The teachers’ theoretical knowledge

Eckerholm (2018) maintains that teachers fail to integrate effective reading strategies instruction due to their lack of theoretical knowledge and didactical training. Clark and Peterson (1986) state that teachers’ knowledge of a certain element forms part of their beliefs, which then determine their pedagogical practice. The data in the present study indicates that
the teachers lack certain knowledge to be able to include reading strategies instruction into their repertoire. Even Teacher 2B who give the students opportunities to develop and make use of metacognitive strategies, were not completely aware of what kind of strategies she was including in her practice. This inadequacy of knowledge and didactical training on how to apply reading strategies is most likely the reason for misalignment if teachers’ beliefs and practices, (see Koukourikou et al., 2018). Not surprisingly, this lack of didactical knowledge impacts their task design, but also affects the teachers’ assessment practices negatively, in particular in relation to validity and reliability (see Green, 2013; Lundahl, 2019). That teachers still lack the didactical training today is somewhat alarming since Pressley and Harris (1990) alerted the research and teaching communities to the problem already 30 years ago.

6.3.2 Educational contexts

Both Khonamri and Salim's (2010) and Bamanger and Gashan’s (2014) studies, as well as most of the research on how reading strategies affect reading comprehension were conducted in the Middle East. In an EFL context, the cultural backgrounds of teachers and students may have an impact on the results (Andersson & Jansson, 2019). Although their similarities in the data in these studies and the present study, it may not be wise to automatically draw similar conclusions in the Swedish context. Nevertheless, two types of contextual factors seem to have similar influence on teacher practice: time constraints and student body composition.

Khonamri and Salim (2010) suggest that time constraints often impedes the transition from teachers’ beliefs to actual practice. Time constraints were explicitly implicated in this context by one of the participating teachers in the data, expressing that there is little room for her to include reading strategies instructions during English class. Furthermore, the impact of time constraints was more profound if the teacher considered her students to exhibit low levels of language proficiency. Skolverket (2018) promotes that “[t]eaching should be adapted to each pupil’s circumstances and needs” (p. 6); consequently, the teachers reported to be guided in their choices by what they deemed their students needed from lesson to lesson. This was evident with one teacher who priorities instructions on grammatical features over reading activities, as she found it more urgent for her students to develop.
Student body composition seems to have even more profound effect on the teachers’ pedagogical decisions. One might argue that a determinative indicator that can decide how different student composition may be assembled, is in which kind socio-economic area a school is situated in. As Skolverket (2012) claims, proficient language users often develop their own strategies and use them consciously or unconsciously. The collected data suggest that students in School 1, the school located in a higher socio-economic area, seem to belong to this category of proficient readers. These students have developed metacognitive awareness and understand that they need tools to overcome specific obstacles. Because of this, their teachers might not be motivated or necessitated to include explicit reading instruction in their practices. However, according to Pressley and Harris (1990), students can only develop reading strategies on their own to a certain extent, and, therefore, explicit reading strategies instruction is still motivated. On the other hand, teachers in School 2 prioritize explicit reading strategies instruction since they believe it may compensate for their students’ low socio-economic backgrounds and help them not only to become better readers, but also better citizens. Hansen et al. (2011) highlight that students’ socio-economic background can be a decisive factor on their reading proficiency, and therefore, it is essential that the teachers from School 2 emphasize reading and reading strategies in their classroom interaction. Skolverket (2012) suggests that less proficient language learners need more guidance to be able to develop strategies as they already struggle with other language features. Apparently, this kind of socio-economic factor seems to be a decisive element which affects the teachers’ beliefs, as well as the degree they include reading activities and reading strategies instructions in their teaching practice. Furthermore, differences in socio-economic backgrounds in Sweden have become even more pronounced recently, which is reflected in differences in school results (Skolverket, 2018b). Even though Skolverket (2018b) stresses that compensatory duty has become a more complex task for schools to perform, this work still needs to be done. Explicit reading strategy instruction should be seen as part of this work of benefit to all students, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.
7. Conclusion

Reading ability is an essential ability for individuals to function in our modern society, it is crucial to possess the necessary reading strategies to enhance one’s reading comprehension ability. This study contributes to the research field on reading in EFL/ESL and teacher beliefs by providing an insight into what extent Swedish English teachers’ beliefs on reading and reading strategies correspond to their classroom practice of setting reading tasks and providing explicit reading strategies instruction. The data suggests that all participating teachers have a positive view on reading and reading strategies, and they all acknowledge the essential role of reading ability in the communicative classroom and consider reading strategies a key component in development of reading comprehension ability. Their beliefs seem to be grounded in their theoretical knowledge and prior experience. In addition, the data suggests that the teachers’ beliefs correspond to their practices to various degrees. The teachers from the school with high socio-economic background do not prioritise reading and explicit reading instruction in their classrooms, while the teachers in the school with low socio-economic background work concertedly on maximising student exposure to reading tasks and explicit reading strategies instruction. The students’ experiences of reading tasks and explicit reading strategies instruction correspond to those of their teachers. Several contextual factors seem to affect the teachers’ pedagogical choices: time constraints, student proficiency levels, and socio-economic backgrounds. That the result differed between the schools was an interesting finding, especially with the socio-economic aspect of it, as the compensatory duty seems to be an influential factor in the teachers' decision making.

This is a small-scale study, and the conclusions cannot be assumed to apply to the Swedish educational context in general. Nevertheless, due to the triangulation of data, this study obtained rich data, which allows me to draw valid and reliable conclusions about the specific educational contexts investigated. Given the found inconsistency between the teachers’ beliefs and their practices for reading tasks and reading strategies instruction, and the significance of reading comprehension ability in the modern society, I call for a larger-scale study into this issue. Furthermore, it would be needed to investigate several schools with different social-economic background to reinforce this factor as a potential impact on teachers’ beliefs and practice. Moreover, further research could also focus on the way teacher programs train teachers-to-be in creating meaningful reading tasks and explicit reading strategies instruction.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Information for participating teachers

Samtycke till medverkan i studentprojekt


Jag kommer spela in det du säger samt ta anteckningar under intervjun. Det du säger kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och ingen annan förutom jag som undersökningsledare och eventuellt min handledare från universitetet kommer ha tillgång till din intervjudata, och materialet kommer att förstöras när mitt examensarbete blivit godkänt. Även i övrigt följs studien Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska regler. Detta innebär att allt kommer vara helt anonymt och inte under några omständigheter kommer kommuner, skolor, elever eller lärare som har deltagit nämnas vid namn i brödtexten eller identifieras på annat sätt. Att delta i studien är självfallet frivilligt och du kan dra sig ur studien när som helst om du skulle ångå ditt deltagande av någon anledning.

Har du frågor om arbetet så är det bara att kontakta mig (se kontaktdetaljerna nedan).

Tack i förhand

Mvh / David Jansson

Email: David.s.jansson@hotmail.com

Telefonnummer: 0725259585

.................................................................
Studentens underskrift och namnförtydligande

Kontaktuppgifter till student (tfn nr, e-mail):

.................................................................

Ansvarig handledare på Malmö universitet:

.................................................................

Kursansvarig på Malmö universitet:

.................................................................

Kontaktuppgifter Malmö universitet:
www.mau.se
040-665 70 00
Appendix B

Information for participating teachers in English

In the teacher training program at Malmö University, the students write a thesis at an advanced level. This work includes doing your own scientific study, based on a question that has come to engage the students during the course of the program. For the study, materials are often collected at schools, in the form of e.g. interviews and observations. The degree project corresponds to 15 higher education credits and is carried out for a total of 10 weeks. Once the degree project has been approved, it is published in Malmö University's database MUEP (http://dspace.mah.se/handle/2043/599).

Consent to participation in student projects

My name is David Jansson and I will soon finish my education as a subject teacher for grades 7–9, with English as the first subject, at Malmö University. I will contact you as an English teacher for grades 7–9 as I will soon begin my degree project on language development in English teaching with a focus on reading. Thus, the participation of English teachers is needed to carry out this study. If you have the opportunity and choose to participate, during v.41-45 I will come out and interview you about reading concerning English teaching. The interview will take about 20-25 minutes of your time.

I will record what you say and take notes during the interview. What you say will be treated confidentially and no one except me as the research leader and possibly my supervisor from the university will have access to your interview data, and the material will be destroyed when my thesis work has been approved. The rest of the study is also followed by the Swedish Research Council's research ethics rules. This means that everything will be completely anonymous and under no circumstances will municipalities, schools, pupils or teachers who have participated be mentioned by name in the body of text or be identified in other ways. Participating in the study is, of course, voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time if you should regret your participation for any reason.
If you have any questions about the work, just contact me (see the contact details below).

Thank you in advance

Best/ David Jansson

Student's signature and name clarification

Student contact information (phone nr, e-mail):

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Responsible supervisor at Malmö University:

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Course coordinator at Malmö University:

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Contact details Malmö universitet:

www.mau.se
040-665 70 00

Datum

Samtycke till elevers medverkan i studentprojekt


Syfte och beskrivning av studie: Studiens syfte är att undersöka hur engelskalärare arbetar med läsning och lässtrategier i sin undervisning. För att kunna få svar på denna fråga behöver jag inkludera ett elevperspektiv och det är där din son/dotter kommer in i bilden. De elever som kommer delta kommer ingå i en gruppintervju, där de kommer få möjlighet att ge sitt perspektiv om hur de upplever hur man arbetar med läsning och lässtrategier under engelskalektionerna.


Studien genomförs i enlighet med Vetenskapsrådets regler för god forskningssed (för mer information: http://www.vr.se/).

Sekrethess: Som nämnd ovan, kommer den insamlade data behandlas varsamt. Allt insamlat material kommer förstöras när arbetet har publicerats. Alla elever och skolor som medverkar i studien kommer att vara anonyma i efterföljande publikationer och presentationer, allt i linje för en god forskningssed.

Frivillighet: Deltagande i denna studie är frivilligt. Däremed så har målsmen all rätt att när som helst dra tillbaka sitt medgivande i studien utan att behöva motivera sitt beslutet.
**Kontakt:** Om det är så att du som målsman har några frågor angående studien, så kan ni kontakta mig via mail (david.s.jansson@hotmail.com) eller telefon (0725259585).
Appendix D

Information for participating students’ parents in English

In the teacher training program at Malmö University, the students write a thesis at an advanced level. This work includes doing your own scientific study, based on a question that has come to engage the students during the course of the program. For the study, materials are often collected at schools, in the form of e.g. interviews and observations. The degree project corresponds to 15 higher education credits and is carried out for a total of 10 weeks. Once the degree project has been approved, it is published in Malmö University’s database MUEP (http://dspace.mah.se/handle/2043/599).

Consent to student participation in student projects

My name is David Jansson and I will soon finish my education as a subject teacher for grades 7–9. I am finishing my last semester and am in the process of writing my degree project, where I will be doing a study where I need to interview students. I have obtained the school’s approval to carry out the study and thus only need the consent of the legal guardians to continue. Before you allow your son/daughter to participate in the study, you can read the following information.

Purpose and description of the study: The purpose of the study is to investigate how English teachers work with reading and reading strategies in their teaching. To be able to answer this question, I need to include a student perspective, and this is where your son/daughter comes into the picture. The students who will participate will be included in a group interview, where they will have the opportunity to give their perspective on how they experience how to work with reading and reading strategies during English lessons. The group interview will take about 15-20 minutes and will be recorded and stored as an audio file. The recorded material included in the study will be transcribed and then analysed. As a research leader, I will only have access to the collected data, and will be treated with the utmost care and will be destroyed when the degree project has been approved here. Further, personal identities and details will not be revealed and those who participate will be completely anonymous. The only thing that will be visible in the final publication is what the year students are in. The study is conducted in accordance with the Swedish Research Council’s rules for good research practice (for more information: http://www.vr.se/).

Privacy: As mentioned above, the collected data will be treated with care. All collected material will be destroyed when the work has been published. All students and schools
participating in the study will be anonymous in subsequent publications and presentations, all in line with good research practice.

Volunteer: Participation in this study is voluntary. Thus, the legal guardians have every right to withdraw his/her consent in the study at any time without having to justify his decision.

Contact: If you as a legal guardian have any questions about the study, you can contact me via mail (david.s.jansson@hotmail.com) or phone (0725259585).
## Appendix E
### Questionnaire for teacher interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Follow up question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Education and work experience**                                    | How long have you worked as a teacher at a compulsory school?  
General view regarding strategies.  
Your general view about strategies.  
How do you interpret teaching different strategies role in relation to the core content and knowledge requirement in the steering documents. | Education and University views and value regarding reading and reading strategies and their effect on learners’ reading comprehension ability. |
| **Views and value regarding reading and reading strategies and their effect on learners’ reading comprehension ability** | Do you think reading has a role in the communitve classroom?  
According to you, what skills are needed to be a proficient reader?  
How do you value reading strategies effect on students’ reading comprehension ability?  
Do you believe that students develop and use reading strategies unintentionally? | How do reading effect oral and written communication?  
If it does, do you believe that the proficiency level of the students plays a role? |
<p>| <strong>Including reading and explicit reading strategies instructions.</strong>  | Which types of classroom activity in reading do you engage your students in? | When students engage in reading comprehension issues during these activity (for example linguistic errors), how do you aid them? |
| <strong>Assessing/confirming students’ ability to use reading strategies</strong>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kind of reading strategies do you find useful for the students to know?</td>
<td>Different strategies for different reading types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you explicitly teach reading strategies?</td>
<td>Concrete examples of the different reading strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you confirm that the students use strategies during the reading process?</td>
<td>If not, what is the reason behind this decision? (Time, lack of knowledge etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the knowledge requirement indicates that the students should use strategies while reading. How does you assess this ability?</td>
<td>Is there any kind of difficulties assessing students use of reading strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F
### Questionnaire for focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General views about reading | 1: Kan ni berätta vad ni tänker på när ni hör ordet läsning?  
2: Är det viktigt för er att kunna läsa? Utveckla gärna hur ni tänker? |
| Students’ experience working with reading during class | 4: [beroende på svar] Anser ni att dessa former av uppgifter ni arbetare med under engelska lektionerna gör att ni blir bättre på att läsa?  
6: Skulle ni vilja jobba mer eller mindre med läsning under engelska lektionerna? Diskutera mellan varandra om vad ni tycker. |
| Students’ experience regarding reading strategies. | 7: När ni läser och inte helt och hållet förstår vad som står i texten [ord som ni inte kan, vad innehållet syftar på osv], hur löser ni detta problem för att komma vidare i er läsning?  
8: Kan ni tillsammans komma fram till vad lärstrategier är för något.  
9: Har eran engelska lärare haft någon lektion där denna lär er specifika lässtrategier?  
10: [beroende på om svaren antyder att de får det] Kan ni ge exempel på dessa lässtrategier ni har lärt er?  
11: [Intervjuarna ger några exempel på strategier] Tror ni att det är viktigt att kunna använda sig av lärstrategier för att bli bättre på att läsa?  
12: 10: [beroende på om svaren antyder att de inte får undervisning på fråga 9] Tycker ni att lärare borde ha med lässtrategier i undervisningen? |